



3 1761 06838295 1

H. Mason Anscombe



Ex Libris
Edwin Harris



HISTORICAL ROMANCES
OF
WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH
VOLUME XIV

THE GOLDSMITH'S WIFE

Copyright 1900 by S. Cassino & Son





The Tonsils at Windsor Castle

Barriers were here erected in the lower ward, and overlooking them was a superb gallery, hung with blue velvet, and embroidered with white roses. This gallery was reserved for the queen, the two duchesses, the court dames, the lady mayoress, and the wives of the citizens.

HISTORICAL ROMANCES

OF

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH

*

*THE GOLDSMITH'S WIFE. IN ONE VOLUME. WITH POR-
TRAIT OF EDWARD IV., ENGRAVED AFTER AN
ORIGINAL PAINTING IN THE ROYAL COL-
LECTION, AND THREE ETCHINGS
BY LÉON LAMBERT, AFTER
PAINTINGS BY HUGH
W. DITZLER*

*

PHILADELPHIA: PRINTED FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY BY
GEORGE BARRIE & SONS

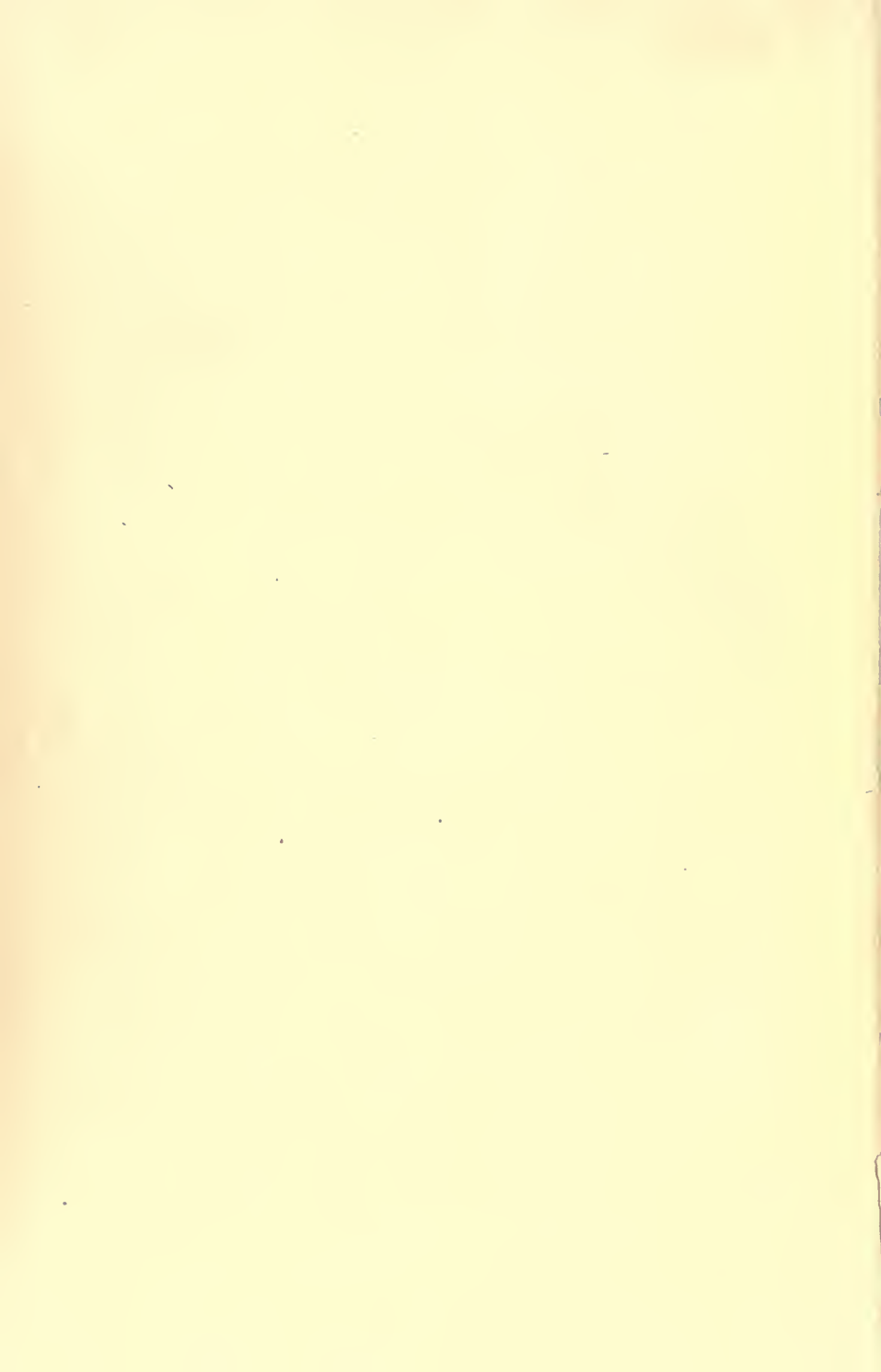


PR
4002
G6
19--

THE GOLDSMITH'S WIFE

BOOK I

ALBAN SHORE



CHAPTER I

HOW JANE MILVERTON, THE MERCER'S DAUGHTER OF CHEAPSIDE, WAS ACCOUNTED THE FAIREST DAMSEL IN LONDON

When Edward the Fourth was king, there were many fair damsels in the city of London, but none to compare with Jane, only daughter of John Milverton, erstwhile a mercer in Cheapside.

Jane Milverton was in her seventeenth spring when her remarkable beauty first began to attract the attention of the young bachelors of the city; and whenever she walked forth with her mother, she was beset by a host of admirers, who vied with each other in endeavors to win a smile from her.

Their efforts were vain. Brought up by a very careful mother, and being naturally modest and discreet, Jane took little notice of them. However, the report of her beauty spread far and wide, and caused so much talk, that people came from all parts of the city to look at her.

Opinions differed, and faults were found—of course, chiefly by her own sex, who were unwilling to admit that she was as lovely as represented; but none could deny that her figure was exquisite, and that her features had a most charming expression.

To be more precise, we may say that her figure was slight and graceful; her tresses of a pale yellow; her features delicately and beautifully moulded; her complexion excessively fair, and her eyes of the softest blue. We ought to add that there was a singular witchery in the glances of those tender blue eyes, experienced by all who came within their influ-

ence; while the pearls disclosed when her coral lips were parted, rendered her smile resistless.

Such was Jane Milverton at seventeen.

As we have just intimated, she had been most carefully brought up by her widowed mother, who, since her husband's death, had led a very secluded life. Indeed, if the young damsel had been educated in a convent, she could scarcely have known less of the world. Strange as it may seem, it is, nevertheless, true, that, until lately, she had been quite unconscious of her own marvellous beauty.

Jane's attire was simple, but it suited her well. Generally, a coverchief, or hood, completely concealed her profuse yellow tresses, but, at times, a pretty little coif allowed them to escape, and flow down her back. A tight-fitting girdle displayed her slim figure to the greatest advantage, and a girdle, with a chain attached to it, rested on her hips. The long-pointed shoes that disguised her tiny feet were almost hidden by a dark blue gown, and their sharp extremities could only just be seen peeping forth. Beyond the girdle and magnificent gold chain, she wore no sort of ornament—not even a collar round her swan-like throat.

Among Jane's innumerable admirers was a rich goldsmith, of Lombard street, named Alban Shore. Deeply smitten by her charms, he resolved to make her his wife. He knew he had many rivals, but as the coy damsel had not shown a preference for anyone, he persuaded himself he should succeed. He could give his bride a handsome dowry, and that was a great recommendation. Moreover, he bore a most honorable character, as his father, Gethelmar Shore, had done before him. Many a wealthy citizen would have been glad to give his daughter to Master Shore, the prosperous goldsmith and banker, but Alban had shown no disposition to marry till he beheld the fair Jane Milverton.

Alban was under thirty, but the long gown of dark red cloth, buttoned from neck to waist, which he wore above his

quilted tunic, and his close, dark cap, with a narrow edge of velvet, combined with his grave looks and demeanor, made him appear at least ten years older. The expression of his countenance was agreeable, and indicated great goodness of heart. He was of middle height, well-proportioned, and strongly built; but his person was completely hidden by his ample gown. From his girdle hung a red leather pouch. Sword, dagger, or weapon of any kind, would have been unsuitable to his peaceful vocation.

Alban Shore made no change in his sober attire when he presented himself one day to Dame Milverton, with the design of proposing for the hand of her fair daughter.

The widow was alone at the time—Jane being in an inner room. As she was still good-looking, she thought the visit might be intended for herself.

Requesting him to be seated, she very considerably sought to relieve him from the embarrassment under which she perceived he labored.

“I know you very well by sight, good Master Shore,” she said; “and, indeed, it is strange, seeing we are such near neighbors, that we are not better acquainted. But I trust to see more of you in future. You will always be welcome.”

Alban bowed, and the widow went on:

“My ever-lamented husband, John Milverton, was one of your worthy father’s customers. Several ornaments, which I still wear on occasions, were purchased at Gethelmar Shore’s shop in Lombard street. Among other matters, there was this ring. I pray you look at it, good Master Shore;” holding up a very pretty finger, on which the ring was placed. “You will observe that a posy is written outside it,—

“ ‘This and the giver
Are thine forever.’

Touching and tender, is it not? Alack and well-a-day! the giver is gone, and I am left alone! John Milverton has been

dead these ten years, Master Shore, and lies in the churchyard of St. Martin's Pomary. I have placed a monument to his memory in the north aisle of the church. Mayhap you have seen it?"

"Often, madam," he replied; "and a very handsome monument it is."

"It cost me three hundred crowns, Master Shore,—every penny. But the money was well bestowed. Do you recollect my husband, worthy sir?"

"Perfectly, madam. John Milverton was one of the most noted mercers in East Cheap. But he must have been considerably older than yourself."

"Thirty years, Master Shore—thirty years. Some foolish folks used to jest at the disparity of our ages. I always declared it was a match of Our Lady's making, since it turned out so happily."

"So I have always heard, madam. You must have made the worthy mercer an excellent wife."

"I ought not to praise myself," said the widow, rather flustered; "but I think I did. And if I could have been tempted to take a second husband, I should have been equally anxious to please him. I have had several good offers, Master Shore—very good offers—but I would accept none of them, having a daughter to attend to."

"Very true, madam; and the greatest credit is due to you for the manner in which you have brought up your daughter."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, Master Shore. I think I have done my duty by her. Her poor, dear father would be amazed if he could behold her now. I myself never expected she would grow up so fair a creature."

"Of a truth, she has burst as suddenly into bloom as a flower," observed the goldsmith. "But she always promised to be beautiful. With so fair a mother, how could it be otherwise?"

“You flatter me, sir,” simpered the widow. “But it is quite true that at Jane’s age I was exactly like what she is now.”

“I can well believe it, madam,” remarked Shore.

“No doubt she is light-complexioned, and I have always been rather dark,” said Dame Milverton; “but the features are similar.”

“Precisely similar,” observed the goldsmith, with a smile, “except that your nose is inclined to be aquiline, and your daughter’s is perfectly straight. And now, madam, I am a man of business, as you are aware, and must come to the point. I dare say you can guess my errand?”

“I have some idea of it, sir,” she replied, casting down her eyes.

“I have serious thoughts of taking a wife, madam. Your daughter’s charms have produced a great impression upon me.”

“My daughter’s charms!” exclaimed the widow, looking up. “I thought——”

“I love her devotedly, madam!” pursued the goldsmith; “and if I am fortunate enough to win her, I will do my best to prove how highly I estimate the prize.”

“I do not doubt it, sir!” replied the widow, in some confusion. “But you have taken me so much by surprise, that I scarcely know what to say.”

“You do not discourage my suit, I trust, madam. Mine are no empty promises. I have always been a man of my word. Jane shall have everything she can desire with me, and I will give her a handsome dowry—ten thousand crowns.”

“You speak so fairly and kindly, Master Shore,” said the widow, who had now recovered herself, “that you deserve a direct answer. To me your offer is very agreeable. What it may be to my daughter, I cannot say, but we will soon ascertain.”

“It is everything in my favor that I have your support, madam,” said Shore, joyfully.

“Not everything,” she replied. “I will do my best to further your suit, but I cannot force Jane’s inclinations.”

“Heaven forbid you should, madam !” he exclaimed. “Unless she can give me her heart, I will not accept her hand.”

“Ah ! here she comes to answer for herself,” cried Dame Milverton, as a light, joyous laugh was heard outside.

Shore’s heart sank within him. Another minute would decide his fate.

An inner door opened, and Jane rushed into the room, with a letter in her hand, laughing very heartily.

CHAPTER II

HOW TWELVE YOUNG BACHELORS FELL IN LOVE WITH JANE, AND ENTREATED HER TO MAKE CHOICE OF ONE OF THEM

How beautiful she looked ! her fair cheek flushed, her blue eyes shining with unwonted lustre, and all the pearls in her lovely mouth displayed. What a bright, joyous countenance ! Alban felt more in love with her than ever !

Jane’s attention being fixed on the letter she had brought to show her mother, she was quite unconscious of the goldsmith’s presence.

“Another proposal !” she exclaimed, as soon as she was able to speak ; “and from that presumptuous young popinjay, Randal Rubicel, the haberdasher’s son, who stopped us yesterday, and would speak with me. He calls me ‘his sweetest Jane,’ ‘the idol of his heart,’ ‘his life,’ ‘his joy,’ ‘his dar-

ling,' and twenty other pretty names, and vows he will kill himself unless I accept him. Well, let him! There will be one coxcomb the less in Cheapside—ha! ha!"

And she indulged in another fit of merriment.

"Jane," said her mother, checking her, "are you aware that Master Shore is here?"

"No, indeed," rejoined her daughter, in dismay; "I thought you were alone. I beg Master Shore's pardon for my heedlessness. He must have thought me very stupid."

"On the contrary," remarked the goldsmith, advancing and bowing, while she returned the salutation, "I have been very much amused. I suppose you often receive such letters?"

"Generally two or three a day—sometimes more," she rejoined, laughing. "But I answer none of them. I had one yesterday from young Simon Muttlebury, the grocer's son, of the Poultry, as full of sweets and dainties as his father's shop. I would read it to you if I had not burnt it."

"Did he think you would condescend to become a grocer's wife?" observed Shore.

"I have had my choice," she continued, "of fish-mongers, merchant-tailors, grocers, drapers, skimmers, ironmongers, vintners, cloth-workers, and mercers. Being a mercer's daughter, I ought to have selected the last—but young Humphrey Buckram did not please me."

"You have not enumerated a goldsmith in your list," observed Shore.

"For a very good reason; no goldsmith has proposed!" she rejoined.

"The reason exists no longer," said Shore. "I have come here for the express purpose of offering you my hand."

"You are jesting with me, Master Shore!" she remarked.

"Nay, it is true!" said her mother. "The worthy gentleman has just spoken to me on the subject."

“I trust I may have better fortune than those who have written to you, sweet Jane,” said Shore, drawing near her. “Will you accept me as a husband?”

“Nay; you must not press me for an answer at once,” she rejoined. “I must have time for consideration. I may, or I may not.”

“At least you do not dismiss me?”

“I do not ask you to come again; but I shall always be pleased to see you if you do come.”

“Then I will gladly avail myself of the permission.”

“’Tis more than she has accorded to anyone else,” remarked Dame Milverton.

“Then I ought to be content,” said Shore. “Having received thus much encouragement, I will venture to offer you this carcanet.”

Opening the little case presented to her, Jane beheld a splendid chain of diamonds.

“O heavens! how exquisite!” she exclaimed. “May I accept this beautiful diamond chain, mother?”

“Assuredly, child,” replied Dame Milverton. “You will never lack jewels if you become Master Shore’s bride. Besides, I must tell you,” she added, in a half whisper, “he has promised to settle a handsome dowry upon you.”

The remark was not without effect upon Jane, and Shore’s hopes began to revive. Evidently the diamonds had pleaded strongly in his behalf.

Jane was still fascinated by the brilliant chain, when a serving-man entered, his countenance proclaiming that he was charged with some important message.

“How now, Griffith! what is the matter?” inquired the widow.

“An’ please you, mistress,” replied the serving-man, with difficulty preserving his gravity, “there are a dozen young bachelors without, who solicit an interview with Mistress Jane.”

“A dozen young bachelors !” exclaimed the gay damsel.
“Who and what are they ?”

“Suitors, no doubt,” observed Shore, laughing.

“Ay, that’s it, your worship,” said Griffith, who was a privileged person. “Mistress Jane has turned the heads of all the young men in the neighborhood !”

“Suitors would never come in such numbers !” cried the widow. “Said’st thou not there were a dozen, Griffith ?”

“And I said truth, for I counted them, madam,” he replied.

“We will soon ascertain their business,” said the widow. “Pray them to step in ; my daughter will receive them in my presence.”

As Griffith went out, Dame Milverton said to the goldsmith, who was preparing to leave :

“Pray do not go, good Master Shore. You may be of assistance to us.”

Next moment the door was thrown wide open by Griffith, and admittance given to a large party of young men, arrayed in jerkins and hose of red, blue, brown, and yellow, most of them armed with daggers, and some wearing shoes with long, pointed toes.

As the young bachelors entered, they all doffed their caps, and made a profound salutation to the company, which they repeated after advancing a little further into the room.

Though all were well-favored, fine-looking young men, their appearance was so grotesque that Jane could scarcely keep her countenance, and Griffith grinned from ear to ear.

The leader of the party, who was no other than Randal Rubicel, the haberdasher’s son, described by Jane as a popinjay, then proceeded to explain the object of their visit.

“You are fortunate, madam,” he said, addressing the widow, but keeping his eye upon Jane as he spoke, “in possessing a daughter universally allowed to be the fairest damsel in London. You see before you twelve young bachelors,

each passionately in love with her, and anxious to obtain her hand. Instead of quarrelling, and settling the difference with the sword, we have agreed to present ourselves in a body to the fair Jane, and entreat her to make choice of one of us for a husband. However great may be the disappointment of those passed over, we have sworn to abide by her decision. The course we have adopted may appear strange, but then it rarely happens that a dozen bachelors fall in love with the same damsel. I need scarcely present my companions to you, since, methinks, you are acquainted with them all."

"Yes; this is Master Simon Muttlebury, the grocer," said the widow; "this is Master Puncheon, the vintner; this, Master Serge, the cloth-worker; this, Master Hide, the skinner; this, Master Buckram, the mercer. But, indeed, you are all well known to me, and there is not one to whom I could object if my daughter's choice should fall upon him."

Rubicel then advanced towards Jane, and bowing lowly, said:

"You have heard what has just passed, fair mistress. Will it please you to cast your eyes towards us, and make a selection?"

"I should feel puzzled," she replied. "You are all so much alike, that, were I to choose, it would be at haphazard. I pray you pass before me singly."

"Willingly," said Rubicel.

And, returning to his companions, he communicated her wishes to them.

Thereupon, all the young bachelors marched slowly past Jane, each gazing amorously at her as he went by, and two or three slightly lingering in the vain hope of being selected, but she did not stop one of them.

The last to make the essay was Rubicel himself; but though he paused, and cast a supplicating look at her, he failed, like those who had preceded him.

The march ended, they all drew up in front, and the question was put to Jane whether she had made a choice.

She shook her head.

A general groan then burst from the assemblage.

"Gentlemen," said Shore, "having had your answer, I must pray you to depart peaceably."

"We shall not depart at your bidding, Alban Shore!" rejoined Rubicel, angrily. "You think to carry off the prize because you are richer than any of us; but you are mistaken! Not till you have vanquished us all shall you wed the beautiful Jane Milverton! You have a dozen duels to fight!—a dozen duels! Speak I not for you as well as for myself, comrades!" he added, to the others.

"You express our sentiments exactly, Rubicel," responded Simon Muttlebury. "This intrusive goldsmith shall fight every one of us, ere we will yield Jane Milverton to him!"

"Ay, every one of us!" echoed the rest of the party.

"You give yourselves strange license, young sirs!" cried the widow, sharply. "You talk of my daughter, as if you had the right to dispose of her; but I shall give her to whom I please, without consulting you! You were allowed admittance on the understanding that you would conduct yourselves decorously, and it is a most unmannerly proceeding on your part to insult a gentleman whom you find in my house!"

"Heed them not, madam," said Shore. "I laugh at their threats!"

"We feel the reproof, madam," said Rubicel, "and will at once retire; but Master Shore shall hear from us!"

"Whenever you please!" replied the goldsmith, carelessly.

"Adieu, sweet mistress!" cried Rubicel, kissing the tips of his fingers to Jane. "If you marry, you must marry one of us; we will brook no rivals!"

"I would rather enter a convent than marry any of you!" cried Jane, contemptuously.

“You will change your mind ere long, fair mistress!” cried Humphrey Buckram. “Recollect there are twelve proper young men from whom you can always choose.”

“Show them to the door, Griffith!—show them to the door!” cried Dame Milverton, impatiently. “We have had enough of this fooling!”

The disappointed bachelors then withdrew, but not one of them left the room without kissing his hand to Jane.

As soon as they were gone, Jane gave vent to the laughter she had hitherto repressed.

“I am glad we are fairly rid of those foolish fops!” she cried. “I hope you will not be troubled on my account, Master Shore.”

“Give yourself no concern about me, fair mistress,” he rejoined. “If I am happy enough to have obtained your consent to my proposal, I shall not heed their opposition.”

“But I have not yet accepted you, Master Shore,” she rejoined, with a laugh; “and I must be quite certain that I like you ere I do.”

“You will never be serious, Jane,” said her mother.

“I hope she will always be gay as now,” remarked Shore. “If I had my way, her path should be ever strewn with flowers!”

“Then my life would be a perpetual wedding-day!” cried Jane, still laughing.

“And a very happy life it would be, were such the case!” said her mother.

Just then, Griffith re-entered the room, and said to the goldsmith:

“Your worship must be pleased to tarry here awhile. Those perverse young bachelors are pacing to and fro before the door, evidently awaiting your coming forth.”

“Let them cool their heels; ’twill do them good!” cried the widow. “If you have no pressing business to

take you hence, good Master Shore, I pray you stay and spend the day with us. We will do our best to entertain you."

The goldsmith accepted the invitation with delight. His rivals had unintentionally done him great service.

CHAPTER III

FROM WHICH IT APPEARS THAT AN OLD WOMAN HAD FORETOLD THAT JANE WOULD HAVE A ROYAL LOVER

Owing to this fortunate circumstance, the enamored goldsmith saw more of the fair object of his affections than he had ever done before.

Never was such a gay, light-hearted creature as Jane Milverton. The most trifling matter excited her merriment, and, as her mother had just stated, it seemed quite impossible she could continue serious for more than a minute.

Alban, however, was enchanted, and would not have had her different for the world. Had he not been already captivated, he could not have resisted her fascinations.

At her mother's request, Jane brought her lute, and sang several merry lays and romances—sang them charmingly.

Alban now felt the full force of her soft blue eyes as they were fixed upon him, while her accents vibrated to his heart. In some of the roundelays he was able to take part, and acquitted himself so well that he obtained her applause, and that was all he desired.

But the blending of their voices had so enthralled him, that, unable to restrain his feelings, he renewed his suit, and vowing to be hers, and hers alone, besought her earnestly to plight her troth to him in her mother's presence.

“I will not engage myself to any one at present,” she said. “In three months you shall have my answer—not before.”

“Three months! Must I wait so long?” cried Alban.

“Indeed you must. I must know you better ere I accept you.”

“’Tis a sufficient reason, and I submit.”

“That is not the reason,” remarked Dame Milverton. “She is waiting for a suitor who will never come. Master Shore shall hear the truth. He will think you very silly, but no matter. You must know, then, worthy sir,” she continued, addressing the goldsmith, “that when Jane was almost a child, she had her fortune told by an old woman, who passed for a witch.”

“Not a word more, I insist!” interrupted her daughter.

“Nay; I will go on! The old woman declared that the child whose little hand she held in her own was destined to great good fortune, and would have a royal lover.”

“A royal lover!” exclaimed Shore. “And do you really believe in the prediction?” he added, to Jane.

“She does!” interposed her mother; “and that is the reason why she declines to accept you.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Jane, blushing.

“I am glad you have no better reason for refusing me than this prophecy,” said Alban.

“You laugh at me,” rejoined Jane, rather piqued, “but it might come to pass. There is no telling.”

“Everything is possible,” observed Shore. “Unluckily, the king is married. He must get rid of his queen before he can wed you. I am afraid you will have to put up with one who, though he cannot boast of royal descent, will love you better than any monarch could love you. Indeed, unless he is belied, King Edward is not altogether faithful to the queen.”

“But she is very beautiful, is she not?” inquired Jane.

“Not so beautiful as she was, but still very beautiful,” rejoined Alban. “As Elizabeth Woodville, daughter of Jacqueline of Luxemburg, Duchess of Bedford, and Sir Richard Woodville, subsequently created Earl Rivers by the king, she was accounted the loveliest damsel in the realm. As you are aware, the queen was the widow of Sir John Gray, of Groby, when the king secretly married her. Some people say she bewitched him, but the only sorcery she practised proceeded from her personal charms. Her first meeting with her royal husband was singular, and, no doubt, it was contrived. One day the king was hunting in Whittlebury Forest, near Grafton Castle, the residence of the Duchess of Bedford, and while riding along a glade, he saw, standing beneath the wide-spreading branches of an oak, a most lovely woman, holding two children by the hand. Struck by her surpassing beauty, he paused to speak with her. Elizabeth Woodville—for she it was—threw herself at his feet, and pleaded for her children, who had been deprived of their inheritance owing to their father’s devotion to the House of Lancaster. She did not plead in vain. The king at once granted her suit, and so captivated was he by the charms of the lovely widow, that within a month he made her his bride. Their espousals took place secretly at Grafton Castle, in the presence of the Duchess of Bedford, by whom it was thought the affair had been planned. ’Tis seldom a plot succeeds so well, but the duchess is wondrously clever, and knew that the king could not resist a pair of beautiful eyes!’”

“His majesty is very handsome, is he not?” asked Jane.

“I marvel you have not seen him,” replied Shore, evasively. “He is frequently in the city, for it is his business to conciliate the rich burgesses. On more than one occasion he has purchased articles of jewelry from me. Unluckily, he does not always pay for what he buys. However, I must own he is very affable. Some of his attendants—the Lord Howard

and Sir John Cheney, for instance, who pay no better than he does—are excessively haughty and supercilious.”

“Oh! how I should like to see him!” cried Jane. “I wish you could conceal me in your shop, Master Shore, when he next pays you a visit.”

“No, no,” said the goldsmith, laughing. “Were you mine—as I trust you will be—I would keep you carefully out of the way of such a daring and unscrupulous libertine as the king.”

“But he shouldn’t see me,” said Jane.

“You might betray yourself unintentionally,” rejoined Alban.

“You are quite right, good Master Shore,” said the widow. “One cannot be too cautious where a person who puts no bridle on his passions, like the king, is concerned. That is the reason why I will never allow Jane to stand at the window when his majesty and his courtiers pass along Cheap-side.”

“If he caught sight of her, he would infallibly be struck by her beauty,” said Shore.

“Suppose he did! what then?” cried Jane. “You seem to fancy I have no power of resistance, and should drop into his majesty’s mouth like a ripe plum. You are both very much mistaken. I have a great curiosity to see the king, and am resolved to gratify it. You look very cross,” she added, to her mother. “Where is the harm, I should like to know?”

“There is a great deal of harm,” rejoined the widow, angrily. “And I will lock you up in your chamber, whenever the king rides by, unless you promise to attend to my injunctions.”

During the foregoing discussion, Alban maintained a cheerful exterior, but he was not quite so easy as he had been in his mind. A feeling of jealousy, caused by Jane’s ardent desire to see the king, had taken possession of him. But he deemed

it ridiculous, and endeavored—though ineffectually—to shake it off.

The rest of the evening passed very pleasantly. The lute was again introduced, and an occasional song filled up the intervals of conversation.

At length the great bell of Paul's tolled forth the hour of nine, warning the discreet goldsmith that it was time to depart; and though he could scarcely tear himself away, he felt he must needs go.

While he was taking leave, Dame Milverton expressed some anxiety lest he should be troubled by the insolent youths who had threatened him; but he soon quieted her alarm, and volunteered to come next evening.

In parting with Jane, he strove to snatch a kiss, but was unsuccessful.

Griffith, on whom he bestowed a piece of silver, as an earnest of his good will, would fain have attended him with a lantern, but he declined the offer.

CHAPTER IV

HOW ALBAN SHORE ON THE WAY HOME ENCOUNTERED TWO COURT KNIGHTS, AND HOW JANE WAS SER- ENADED

The night proved so dark, that Alban regretted he had not brought Griffith and the lantern with him; for though he had laughed at Dame Milverton's fears, he was not altogether without apprehension of an attack by some of his rivals, who might be lying in ambuscade. Moreover, it also occurred to him that he was without a defensive weapon of any kind.

However, he marched on resolutely, and had proceeded about a hundred yards in the direction of Lombard street, without encountering anyone, when he perceived two persons standing at the corner of Wood street.

Both were muffled up in long mantles, and their appearance being rather suspicious, he would have avoided them, but it was too late, for one of them—a person of much loftier stature than any of the young bachelors, stepped towards him, and in accents that had something of authority in their tone, said :

“Save you, friend! Can’st tell us which is Dame Milverton’s dwelling?”

Startled by the inquiry, Shore did not immediately answer, and the tall stranger repeated the inquiry, yet more authoritatively.

“What would you with her?” said the goldsmith. “Dame Milverton receives not visitors at this hour.”

“Soh! you are acquainted with her,” cried the other. “By St. George, that is lucky! You shall show us to the house, and introduce us to the widow.”

“For whom do you take me, that you venture to make such a proposition?” demanded Shore, controlling his anger.

“I take thee for an honest and estimable burgess,” replied the other. “Nay, if I am not wrong—for I cannot distinguish thy features very clearly—thou art Shore, the goldsmith of Lombard street.”

“You have guessed rightly,” said Alban; “I am Shore, the goldsmith. Your voice seems familiar to me; but I cannot give you a name. You belong not to the city—of that I am certain.”

“No, by the mass, I belong to the court! My companion and myself are knights, attendant upon the king. He is Sir William Chamberlain, and I am Sir Edward de Longespée. Now you know who we are, will you conduct us to Dame

Milverton's habitation? We have heard much of the extraordinary beauty of her daughter Jane, and desire to behold the fair young damsel."

A jealous pang shot through Shore's breast as he listened to the explanation. He had previously suspected their design; but this plain avowal quite staggered him.

"I will not be accessory to any such plan, Sir Edward," he replied. "If you desire to behold Dame Milverton's daughter, you must call at a proper hour."

"My belief is you are in love with her yourself, Master Shore," cried Sir William, advancing, "and are therefore unwilling we should see her."

"Be not alarmed, Shore," said Longespée; "we have no intention of carrying her off. Very likely her charms have been overrated."

"There is not a damsel at court who is half so beautiful," cried Alban.

"Said I not thou art in love with her?" exclaimed Sir William, laughing. "Thou hast betrayed thyself, Shore."

"We will not be baffled in our quest," said Longespée. "Since this churlish goldsmith refuses to direct us, we will find out the house without him. Good-night, Shore! Thou wilt regret thy incivility."

And they moved on.

Greatly disturbed, the goldsmith was considering what he should do, when the door of the Mitre, a famous tavern close at hand, was suddenly opened, and forth issued the whole of the young bachelors, who had been carousing together. From the noise they made, and their unsteady gait, it was evident their potations had been deep.

The light streaming from the entrance of the tavern revealed Shore to them, and setting up a loud shout, they hurried towards him.

"By St. Martin! this is a rare piece of luck!" cried Rubicel. "Who would have thought of finding our goldsmith

here? Since fate has delivered thee into our hands, thou shalt not escape till thou hast sworn to resign all pretensions to the fair Jane."

"Thou hearest, Shore?" cried Simon Muttlebury. "The oath shall be dictated to thee."

"I will take no oath on compulsion," said Alban. "Detain me at your peril!"

"At our peril!" cried Muttlebury, with a scornful laugh, and drawing his sword as he spoke. "That is good! Thou hadst best comply without more ado."

"Swear to resign the damsel, and thou art free," said Rubicel.

"Never!" cried Shore. "You seek in vain to intimidate me," he added, as swords were flourished in his face. "Help! help!"

"Cease this clamor," exclaimed Muttlebury, "or we will silence thee effectually!"

But the goldsmith called out more loudly.

His cries reached the ears of the courtiers, and they hurried back to the spot.

Recognizing Shore's voice, and finding him beset by numbers, they whipped out their blades, and ordered his captors to set him free.

Instead of obeying, the valorous young citizens turned upon them; but after a few blows had been exchanged with their powerful adversaries, their swords were knocked from their grasp, and they were compelled to let the captive go.

While the discomfited bachelors picked up their weapons, the goldsmith tendered his best thanks to his deliverers.

"What offence hast thou given these varlets, Master Shore, that they should thus maltreat thee?" demanded Longespée.

"That they themselves can best explain, Sir Edward," replied Alban.

"We bear him no ill will," said Rubicel. "He is our

rival for the hand of the fairest damsel in the city. By reason of his wealth, his chance is greater than ours, so we have been trying to persuade him to retire."

"Go to, rascal!" cried Longespée, laughing. "Thy mode of persuasion savors of force. But thou speakest of the fairest damsel in the city. That should be Jane Milverton."

"Your worship hath made a good guess," replied Rubicel. "'Tis she, in sooth."

"Then ye are all her suitors?"

"All!" cried the bachelors, with one voice.

Longespée and his companion laughed heartily.

"We are not Jane's only admirers," said Muttlebury. "For that matter, half the young men in London are in love with her. Doubtless her charms have been heard of at court, and may even have reached the king's ears."

"Thou art right, good fellow—they have," said Longespée. "I should like to judge of this paragon of perfection. I may not think so highly of her as thou dost. What suits thy taste may not suit mine."

"There cannot be two opinions as to Jane Milverton's beauty," said Rubicel. "She dwells hereabouts. A serenade might bring her to the window, and you could then obtain a glimpse of her. Unluckily, we are not provided with lute or cittern."

"But you have voices worth listening to, I'll be sworn," said Longespée, pleased with the notion.

"Now I bethink me, there is a minstrel in the Mitre," continued Rubicel. "We might take him with us."

"Excellent!" cried Longespée. "Priṭhee, fetch him!"

And as Rubicel departed on the errand, he added to the goldsmith, "I shall have my wish, and without trouble."

Shore was too much vexed to make a reply.

A couple of silver groats induced the minstrel to accompany the party. The young bachelors led the way to the widow's

domicile, which was at no great distance, and the two courtiers followed.

Shore went with them, resolved to see the end of the adventure.

Like all the adjoining habitations, Dame Milverton's house was built of lath and plaster, and had bay windows, and pointed gables of carved oak.

A light was visible in the lower room, but the window-curtains were drawn. Everybody felt certain, however, that those inside the apartment were Jane and her mother.

As soon as the young bachelors had arranged themselves, the minstrel struck up a tender love-song—all the youths joining in chorus at the end of each couplet.

At first, very little notice was taken of the serenaders, but by-and-by there were indications that the song was listened to; and before it concluded, the curtains were drawn back, and Jane and her mother could be seen.

As the damsel held a taper in her hand, her fair features were clearly distinguishable.

Never was a creature more charming seen than was presented to the lookers-on. The two courtiers were enraptured.

"'Tis she!—'tis Jane Milverton herself!" said Rubicel. "What think you of her? Is her beauty overrated?"

"Not a whit," rejoined Longespée. "By my halidom! she is the loveliest creature I ever beheld. I should never tire of gazing at her."

"You are crazed, like all the rest," said his companion, laughing at his enthusiasm.

"I must not lose this opportunity," said Longespée. "I will speak to her."

"Nay, I beseech you, do not!" cried the other.

Unaccustomed, however, to put any restraint upon himself, and regardless of consequences, the tall knight derided the counsel, and marching up to the window, tapped against it.

Startled by the noise, Jane looked in the direction whence it proceeded, but could only discern a lofty figure.

Longespée tapped again.

"A word with you, fair damsel, I entreat," he cried.

"Who is it?" asked Jane. "I hold no converse with a stranger."

"Open the window and you shall learn who I am," said the knight.

"Whoever you are, I owe you no thanks for bringing those troublesome youths here," she rejoined. "Begone, and take them with you. They have disturbed me sufficiently."

"Deny me not!" implored the knight. "I have something important to say to you."

"How tiresome he is!" exclaimed Jane. "Well, I must get rid of him."

And she was stepping towards the window, when some one amid the throng collected outside, called out in a loud voice, "Beware!"

In an instant the taper was extinguished, and Jane vanished.

Immediately afterwards, the curtains were again drawn, and nothing more could be seen of the inmates of the house.

Feeling that his chance was over, the knight drew back.

"Who called out?" he angrily demanded.

No one could tell him. But he suspected it must have been Shore, for the goldsmith could not be discovered.

"Are you now ready to depart?" inquired his companion, approaching him.

Longespée answered in the affirmative.

The other then placed a whistle to his lips, and blew a call.

The young bachelors were filled with wonderment, but their surprise increased when two grooms appeared, each leading a horse.

The knights instantly mounted, and, bidding "Good-night" to the youths, rode off in the direction of Ludgate.

“Those must be great personages,” remarked Rubicel to his companions. “Marked you not that their grooms wore the royal livery?”

CHAPTER V

IN WHAT MANNER JANE'S CONSENT WAS WON BY ALBAN

Nearly three months had passed by, and during this period of probation Alban was constant in his attendance upon Jane.

On each evening he came to her mother's house, and was always well received, but he could not flatter himself that he made much progress in the young damsel's affections.

She did not dislike his society, but appeared indifferent to him; and he felt her coldness deeply. Sometimes he fancied she loved another, but he was utterly unable to discover his rival. It could not be one of the twelve young bachelors; for though they still persecuted Jane with their addresses, she would listen to none of them. It could scarcely be Sir Edward de Longespée, for nothing more had been seen of him since the night when he accompanied the serenaders, and tapped against the window.

Alban was perplexed. He mentioned his suspicions to Dame Milverton, but she told him he was mistaken. She was certain he had no secret rival.

Notwithstanding these assurances, he was far from easy, and suffered so much from Jane's coldness, that he resolved to bring the matter to an issue one way or the other.

Generally, Dame Milverton was with them when they met; but in the evening in question she had been induced, by a sign from Alban, to leave them alone together.

No sooner had she quitted the room, than taking Jane's

small, white hand in his own, he pressed it to his lips. Nor did he part with it as he addressed her.

"I beseech you to abridge the term you have imposed upon me, sweetest Jane," he said. "I find I am not equal to so severe a trial. Besides, why should we wait so long? You know me now as well as you will ever know me, for I have no concealment from you. How fondly I love you I need not say; but I desire to prove my love by the devotion of a husband. Your mother has given her consent to the marriage—why withhold yours? My house is ready for you; my servants are anxious to call you mistress; all that money can procure shall be yours!"

"I know you can give me wealth, Alban," she rejoined. "But you cannot give me rank."

He looked at her for a moment in surprise, and then said in a half-reproachful tone:

"That silly prophecy still dwells on your mind, I perceive, Jane. I would I were a prince, for your sake!"

"Would you were!" she exclaimed.

Then seeing how much she had pained him, she added, "I am very foolish—very ungrateful. 'Tis a poor return for your love and kindness to wish you were some one else. Nevertheless, I must own I should like you better if you were a prince."

"If these are your real sentiments, Jane," he remarked, coldly, and letting go her hand, "it will be better that all should be at an end between us."

"Be it so, if you wish it," she rejoined. "I have spoken frankly. As Alban Shore, the goldsmith, I love you; but I should love you better if you were a noble—still better if you were a prince."

"If this is jesting, I do not like it," he said. "Be serious for a moment, if you can. Do you love me well enough to wed me?"

"I can't tell."

“But you must decide.”

“Suppose I say ‘No?’”

“In that case I shall instantly take my departure, and shall not return.”

Uttered in a firm, sad tone, these words produced an impression upon Jane.

Suddenly changing her manner, she replied :

“Then I must needs say ‘Yes.’”

An instantaneous revulsion took place in Alban's feelings.

Catching her in his arms, and pressing her rapturously to his breast, he exclaimed :

“Our marriage shall take place to-morrow.”

“Why so much haste?” she asked.

“Because I have waited too long already—because I am afraid of losing you.”

“How distrustful you are!” she cried.

“Have I not reason for distrust?” he rejoined.

Just then Dame Milverton entered the room, and seeing how matters stood, called out :

“So all is settled at last, I perceive. I am right glad of it.”

“Yes; Jane has agreed that our marriage shall take place to-morrow,” cried Alban, joyfully.

“To-morrow!” exclaimed the widow. “That is allowing but scant time for preparation.”

“So I think,” observed Jane. “I am in no such hurry. Next week, or next month, will please me just as well.”

“But it won't please me,” cried her mother. “We will have no postponement. All can be managed without difficulty,” she added, glancing at Alban.

“Yes, there need be no delay,” he exclaimed. “We will be married at Paul's. I will go and make all needful arrangements. I leave you to invite the wedding guests, madam,” he said to Dame Milverton.

"Stay," cried Jane, as he was hurrying off. "I have something to say to you."

"I'll hear it when I come back," he cried. "I want to catch Father Belasius."

Jane again attempted to remonstrate, but he stopped her mouth with a kiss, and rushed out of the room.

"My consent has been wrested from me," she cried, as soon as he was gone. "I hope I shall not repent."

CHAPTER VI

HOW ALBAN SHORE WAS WEDDED TO THE BEAUTIFUL JANE MILVERTON IN SAINT PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, AND HOW THE KING SALUTED THE BRIDE AT THE PORCH

Shortly before noon, on the day appointed for Alban Shore's marriage with the beautiful Jane Milverton, it chanced that the king, who had signified his intention of holding a conference with the lord mayor and aldermen, at Guildhall, entered the city on horseback.

Accompanied by his chief favorites, Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, who filled the office of high constable, and the Lord Hastings, grand chamberlain, his majesty was preceded by a small party of mounted archers, and followed by half-a-dozen henchmen in doublets of blue satin, richly embroidered, murrey-colored silk hose, and black velvet caps.

Edward the Fourth was then in the very prime of manhood, and justly accounted the handsomest man of his day. His figure was a remarkable combination of strength and elegance—his limbs being very gracefully formed, yet full of vigor. Trained from early youth in all manly exercises, he became so skilful that, as Earl of March, in his nineteenth

year, he overthrew every knight he encountered in the tilt-yard.

As the king wore neither beard nor moustaches, the fine classical outline of his features could be fully distinguished. His complexion was fair, his eyes blue, and his chestnut locks were worn thickly at the back of the head. Yet there was nothing effeminate in his expression; and although good nature seemed stamped upon his handsome lineaments, he had a very courageous and determined look.

Edward's extreme affability and easy manner rendered him popular with all classes, while his gallantry and good looks gained him the goodwill of the fairer portion of his subjects.

Brave, courteous, handsome, chivalrous, accomplished, he seemed the very model of a king; but we are bound to say that he had many faults. Though good-natured, he was quick to take offence, unforgiving when offended, sanguinary in the field, and a confirmed voluptuary.

Elegant in his tastes, the handsome monarch was exceedingly fond of rich attire. Cloth of silver and gold, and velvet lined with the most precious furs, were his constant wear.

On the present occasion an embroidered doublet, of murrey-colored velvet, fitting tightly to the shape, and having pinked sleeves, so as to show the fine linen beneath it, displayed his figure to the greatest advantage, while blue silk hose set off his shapely limbs. The points of his yellow morocco boots, then called poulaines, and more than an ell in length, were fastened to the knee by chains of gold. His mantle was of purple velvet, lined with the most precious fur. Round his neck was a collar of suns and roses, with the white lion of the House of March appended. A magnificent girdle, studded with gems, and placed above the hips, sustained his sword and dagger, both of which had splendid hilts. His purple velvet cap was without a plume, and ornamented with pearls.

A consummate horseman, Edward was never seen to greater advantage than in the saddle, and the noble steed he now bestrode seemed proud of his princely burden. The charger was caparisoned in blue cloth of gold, embroidered with the royal badge, a flaming sun.

The two nobles by whom the king was attended were fine-looking men, but could not for a moment be compared with their royal master.

Buckingham had a doublet of tawny satin, with a surcoat of violet, ingrained; and Hastings wore a green satin pourpoint, embroidered with gold, and a velvet surcoat of the same color. Each was decked with a magnificent chain and girdle, and had a collar of suns and roses like the king.

Though Edward's visits to the city were of frequent occurrence, crowds always collected to gaze at him, and welcome him with shouts, while fair, smiling faces could be seen at all the open windows. On the owners of these fair faces the debonair monarch failed not to bestow an admiring glance as he rode along.

On the morning in question, he had a good many buxom dames and comely damsels to greet; and as he was careful not to neglect any of them, his progress from Ludgate to Saint Paul's was necessarily rather slow.

But he appeared in high good humor, and not unfrequently jested with Buckingham and Hastings, who laughed heartily, as beseemed them, at the king's pleasantries.

Occasionally, also, he would call their attention to some fair maiden, speaking of her in terms of praise, so loudly uttered as to summon a blush to her cheeks.

Just as the royal cavalcade arrived at Saint Paul's, a great number of persons issued from the cathedral, and ranged themselves on each side of the steps, evidently expecting that some one they were anxious to behold would speedily come forth.

So engrossed were they by this object that they scarcely

noticed the king, who, not wishing to interfere with them, reined in his charger, and signed to the attendant guard to halt.

Scarcely was the command obeyed, when the great portal was thrown open, and forth came a bridal party.

The marriage between Alban Shore and the lovely Jane Milverton had just been solemnized in St. Etheldreda's chapel, in the presence of an immense number of spectators, amongst whom were the twelve disappointed bachelors.

Jane looked exquisitely beautiful in her bridal costume. A wreath encircled her fair brow, and her sunny locks, being entirely unbound, flowed down her back. The long white veil, that covered her almost from head to foot, was removed by the bridesmaids as she knelt at the altar.

The ceremony was performed by Father Bellasius, a canon of the cathedral. It was remarked by the bridesmaids that Jane's accents were scarcely audible; and when the nuptial rites had been performed, and Dame Milverton embraced her daughter, she perceived that Jane trembled.

Alban, however, was now the happiest of men; and when his discomfited rivals, who had gathered round him, strove to provoke him by their looks, he regarded them with supreme disdain.

The scene within the cathedral as the bridal party moved along the aisle was extraordinary. Hundreds of spectators, eager to obtain a glimpse of the beautiful bride, pressed upon the newly-wedded pair; and as Jane had not resumed her veil, the curiosity of these persons was gratified.

All who beheld her declared she looked charming, and it was universally thought that she was the loveliest bride that had ever been seen in the ancient cathedral.

At length, after several interruptions, the little procession reached the portal; and as the newly-married pair came forth, Jane's gaze passed rapidly over the vast throng collected outside, and alighted upon a splendid-looking personage on

horseback, who, with the two nobles in attendance upon him, was stationed at a little distance from the portal.

“’Tis the king!” observed Alban.

The information was unneeded. The sumptuous apparel and majestic demeanor of the horseman, combined with the deference paid him by his attendants, proclaimed his exalted rank.

Nor could she for a moment doubt to whom that stately figure and noble countenance belonged. ’Twas he whom she had so ardently desired to behold.

But her surprise increased when he spoke, and she recognized the voice of the presumptuous stranger who had addressed her at the window of her mother’s dwelling.

What strange emotions were excited in her breast by the discovery!

After gazing at her for a moment with looks of undisguised admiration, Edward pressed forward his charger, while the archers kept back the crowd.

“By my troth, Master Shore,” he cried, in a good-humored voice, “you are a right clever fellow, and as lucky as clever! I know not by what arts you have beaten a whole host of rivals, and contrived to win for yourself the fairest damsel that our good city of London can boast; but, however you have gained her, you deserve our hearty congratulations on your success, and you have them!”

“I humbly thank your majesty,” replied Alban, bowing profoundly, while Jane made a deep reverence, “in my own name, and in that of my bride. I can assure your majesty that I esteem myself singularly fortunate in having obtained such a prize!”

“No wonder!” cried Edward. “But hark ye, Shore! you must not exclude your beauteous wife from public view. If so, all the young bachelors in the city will regret that she has bestowed her hand upon you. Let her be seen; let her appear at all shows and entertainments; let no restraint be

put upon her. She must do as she pleases, go where she pleases, and be indulged in all her whims and fancies. This ought now to be agreed upon."

"It is agreed upon, my gracious liege," replied Shore. "My wife shall do exactly as she pleases."

"Tis well!" cried Edward. "We are now satisfied you will make an indulgent and easy-going husband, and the fair Jane will be the most enviable wife in the city, as she is undoubtedly the prettiest."

Great merriment followed the king's speech.

"I know not how to thank your majesty for the interest you are pleased to take in me," said Jane, whose cheeks were suffused with blushes. "But indeed I am very grateful."

"Bring thy wife nearer to me, Shore," said the king. "I have a trifling gift to bestow upon her."

And as the injunction was obeyed, and the blushing bride, who really looked lovelier than ever, stood beside him, Edward detached a small diamond clasp from his attire, and presented it to her.

Then, bending down, he passed his arm round her waist, and slightly raising her, imprinted a kiss on her rosy lips.

That Shore approved of this proceeding on the part of the gallant monarch, we cannot avouch; but he forced a smile; and it is quite certain that Jane was not offended.

The lookers-on were highly diverted.

In the midst of the general merriment, the king bade adieu to Jane, and, attended by his suite, rode on to Guildhall.

CHAPTER VII

HOW JANE FOUND A DANGEROUS CONFIDANTE IN
ALICIA FORDHAM

Some three years had flown since Jane became the wife of Alban Shore, and if she was not perfectly happy, it was her own fault, for she had a most devoted husband, who strove to gratify her every wish.

As she had heretofore been styled the loveliest damsel in the city, she was now known as the fairest wife. None so beautiful as Mistress Shore.

The goldsmith was envied for his good fortune by a great number of city gallants, among whom were the young bachelors previously mentioned, all of whom were still bachelors. But though many of these impertinent coxcombs would fain have intruded upon her notice, Jane gave none of them the slightest encouragement.

During the long interval we have chosen to pass over, Jane had sustained a very great and, indeed, irreparable loss in the death of her mother. This sad event occurred quite unexpectedly about a year after she had quitted the maternal roof, and was a source of great grief to her. Alban himself sincerely lamented his mother-in-law, and he had more reason for regret than he was aware of at the time. As long as Dame Milverton lived, she watched most carefully over her daughter, who was always governed by her counsels.

Deprived of her mother's judicious advice, Jane chose a friend nearly of her own age, who flattered her in order to obtain an influence over her, and made it her business never to say anything disagreeable. Alicia Fordham, the friend in question,

had been one of Jane's bridesmaids, and had since become the wife of a mercer, dwelling in the Poultry.

A lively brunette, with fine dark eyes and dark tresses, and a pretty figure, which she set off to the best advantage by dress,—Mistress Fordham had a very agreeable insinuating manner. She laid herself out to please Jane, and succeeded so well that she soon became her bosom friend and *confidante*. Mistress Shore could not exist without her.

This intimacy had a mischievous effect upon the goldsmith's young wife, and would never have been permitted had her mother been alive.

Shore did not altogether approve of it, though he had no idea of the danger; but seeing how fond Jane was of her friend, he did not like to interfere. Moreover, Mistress Fordham was careful to do nothing to forfeit his good opinion.

Never since her wedding-day had Jane set eyes upon the king. Almost immediately after their meeting at the portal of the cathedral, a conspiracy broke out in the North, that led to a renewal of the civil wars that had previously desolated the kingdom, and the best blood in the country again flowed in torrents on the field of battle and on the scaffold.

Defeated by Warwick, Edward was compelled to fly the kingdom, and take refuge in Holland. But he returned, and soon raising another army, marched upon London, where the citizens opened the gates to him.

Then followed the sanguinary Battle of Barnet, at which Warwick was slain; and three weeks afterwards the fate of the Lancastrians was decided at Tewkesbury, when Queen Margaret of Anjou and her son were taken prisoners. The young prince was massacred by Clarence and Gloucester, in the presence of the victorious Edward, and the queen was sent a prisoner to the Tower.

The unfortunate Henry VI. having been secretly put to death in the Tower, and all the chief partisans of the Red

Rose removed, Edward became the tranquil possessor of the throne, and gave himself up for a time to ease and enjoyment.

But growing tired of this indolence, he roused himself, and entered into a league with his brother-in-law, the Duke of Burgundy, for the invasion of France. With this design he collected a large army, and made other warlike preparations, and he was endeavoring to obtain the necessary supplies for the expedition at the time when our story is resumed.

Firmly attached to the House of York, Shore had watched the long struggle in which Edward had been engaged with the keenest interest. His chief desire, however, was that these internal dissensions should be settled, and the kingdom restored to tranquillity. A civil war was not favorable to his business, either as a banker or a goldsmith, and while it lasted, more jewels and plate were sold than bought. It is true that he could have lent money to half-ruined nobles and knights at any rate of interest he chose to demand; but, as we have said, he was not a usurer. Thus, though he regretted the fate of the unfortunate Henry VI., he was rejoiced when Edward was firmly settled on the throne. The projected invasion of France was popular with the citizens, and Shore shared the general enthusiasm.

One day, when Jane was alone in an upper room, looking into Lombard-street, Mistress Fordham presented herself in a state of great excitement, and exclaimed:

“What do you think, Jane? The king is coming here this morning. You have often said you wished to see his majesty again. Now you will have an opportunity. He has business to transact with Shore, and will be here at noon.”

“How know you this, Alice?” inquired Jane.

“A royal messenger is below,” replied Mistress Fordham. “I saw him as I came in, and learnt his errand. No doubt the king wants to borrow money for the French invasion. But he is sure to ask for you.”

“That is very unlikely,” replied Jane, blushing. “I make no doubt he has quite forgotten me. He only saw me on one occasion—nearly three years ago.”

“But recollect what occurred then,” said Alice. “’Tis impossible he can have forgotten you.”

“I hope he has,” said Jane.

“I am quite sure he has not,” rejoined Alice. “I myself witnessed the scene at the porch of the cathedral, and the king’s looks showed plainly enough how much he was in love with you. No! no! be sure he has not forgotten you.”

“But I have never heard from him since—never received the slightest message,” cried Jane.

“That is easily accounted for,” rejoined Mistress Fordham. “The rising in Yorkshire took place at the time, and his majesty was obliged to march off at once to put down the insurgents. Since then, as you know, he has been constantly engaged in warfare, and has had no time, until lately, to think of lighter matters. As to his having forgotten you, that is quite out of the question.”

“You alarm me, Alice. If I thought it likely the king had any design—such as you suggest—in coming here, I would avoid him; for, though I would never listen to his addresses, I should not like to trust myself with him—for it may be very difficult to say ‘No’ to a king, and my duty to my husband will not allow me to say ‘Yes.’ Do you really believe he troubles his head about me?”

“I scarcely know how to reply, since you put the question to me in that way,” said Mistress Fordham. “I am quite certain the king was in love with you—greatly in love—three years ago. Possibly circumstances may have obliterated your image from his memory, but as you are now lovelier than ever, I am quite certain when he beholds you again that his passion will be revived.”

“What would you advise me to do?” cried Jane. “I ought not to see him again.”

"Why not?" cried Mistress Fordham. "Surely you have sufficient reliance on yourself! But it will be time enough to consider what you ought to do when you see him."

"No; it will then be too late," said Jane. "To enable you to judge for me, I will confess that for some time after the interview with the king, to which you have just alluded, I did indulge a feeling for him that savored of love; but I conquered it at last, and now he is nothing to me. Were I to see him again, the feeling might return. You know I have the best and kindest of husbands, and I would not wrong him for the world."

"Shore is an excellent man," said Alice. "But if he were ten times better than he is, I should not think him comparable to the king."

"Alice, I will not allow you to disparage my husband."

"Nay, I deny him none of his merits. I only wish he were as handsome as the king."

"He is quite handsome enough for me," replied Jane. "I am sure he has always been faithful to me, and that is more than the queen can say of her royal consort."

"Poh! she does not trouble herself about his majesty's infidelities," said Mistress Fordham. "Fortunately for herself, she is not of a jealous disposition."

Just then a great noise was heard in the street, and, guessing the cause of the disturbance, they flew to the window, and beheld the king.

With him were the Lord Hastings and the Lord Howard, and he was attended by a small body-guard of mounted archers, and a couple of grooms, one of whom held the bridle of his charger as he dismounted. A small body-guard of archers kept back the crowd.

Edward paused for a moment to say a word to Lord Hastings, and during this interval Shore came forth bare-headed,

and after making a profound obeisance, ushered the king ceremoniously into his house.

The two nobles did not alight, and the crowd collected in the street was kept back by the archers.

CHAPTER VIII

SHOWING ON WHAT ERRAND THE KING CAME TO LOMBARD STREET

Had Jane acted up to the prudent resolution she had formed, she would have instantly retired from the window when she found it was the king; but she appeared quite fascinated, and continued gazing at him as long as he remained in sight.

How majestic was his mien! Sumptuous attire set off his noble person to the greatest advantage, and so lofty was his stature that he quite dwarfed those who stood near him.

That the king noticed her, Jane could not doubt. Just as he was about to enter the house, he cast his eyes upwards, and gave her a glance of recognition.

Momentary as was the look, it caused the most violent perturbation in her breast, and she shrank from the searching scrutiny of Alice, who was closely watching her.

"Well, was I not right?" cried the latter. "I said you would soon see the king, and lo! here he is. But you look quite overcome. You had better sit down."

"Yes; I do feel rather faint," replied Jane, sinking into a chair. "But I shall recover in a moment. I did not think I should have been so foolish. The king's sudden appearance has thrown me into this state."

"Prepare yourself for an interview," remarked Mistress Fordham. "Depend upon it, you will be sent for."

"Nay, then I must indeed prepare," cried Jane, starting up. "I must make some slight change in my attire. Call Drusilla for me, I beg you, Alice."

"No change is necessary," replied Mistress Fordham. "You cannot look better. Your dress suits you to admiration, and I am sure his majesty will be of my opinion. There is not a lady at court who looks half so well in her velvet and jewels."

"Ah! Alice, you are a dreadful flatterer. But I am running headlong into the danger I ought to avoid. I must stop while there is yet time. Help me, Alice, help me, or I am lost!"

"Why, what a silly timorous creature you are! There is nothing to cause this uneasiness. His majesty will pay you a few compliments, and then the interview will be over."

"But it may lead to another interview; there is the danger, Alice."

Whatever reply Mistress Fordham intended was cut short by the sudden entrance of a very pretty handmaiden, whose looks betokened great excitement.

"The king is coming upstairs, madam," exclaimed Drusilla.

"Oh, dear! what shall I do?" cried Jane.

"Receive him, of course," rejoined the other. "What else can you do?"

"Nay, madam, there's nothing to be afraid of," observed Drusilla, in an encouraging tone. "His majesty looks very gracious. He even smiled at me when I was sent up to you by master. But here he is."

"Saints protect me!" mentally ejaculated Jane.

But, before describing the meeting between Edward and the goldsmith's wife, we must see what took place in Shore's back parlor, whither the king had been conducted when he entered the goldsmith's shop.

No sooner were they alone together in this room than Edward, who wanted to borrow money from the rich goldsmith, thus opened his business :

“ I have come to you for assistance, good Master Shore,” he said. “ You know that I am about to invade France, with the design of gaining the crown of that country ; or, at least, Normandy and Guienne. I have been very liberally dealt with by some of your fellow citizens ; but, though I have obtained large sums from them, I have not yet got enough. You must find me ten thousand crowns. I will repay you, if I am victorious, as I shall be, for I have the aid of the Dukes of Burgundy and Bretagne.”

“ Ten thousand crowns ! ’Tis a large sum,” observed Shore.

“ Nay, if you require it, I will give you ample security—jewels of thrice the value.”

“ The deposit is unnecessary,” said Shore. “ Your majesty shall have the sum you require. I will take your royal word for the repayment of the money.”

“ By St. George ! you are a noble fellow, Shore !” cried Edward. “ Not without reason have you been praised for liberality. You shall not find me ungrateful. Ask any favor in return ; ’tis granted ere asked. I swear it by my father’s head !”

“ I have no boon to ask now, my gracious liege,” rejoined Shore. “ Hereafter I may venture to remind you of your promise.”

“ When you please,” cried the king. “ Be sure I shall not forget it. And now, since we have settled this grave affair so satisfactorily, let us turn to a pleasanter matter. It was my good fortune to behold your lovely wife on your wedding day at St. Paul’s, and unless my eyes deceived me, I caught sight of her just now at the window above your shop. I would fain have a word with her.”

“ I will send for her at once,” rejoined the goldsmith.

And, opening a side door, he called for Drusilla.

“Nay, by my faith,” cried the king. “Mistress Shore shall not come to me; I will go to her. Lead the way, I pray you; lead the way.”

Though somewhat discomposed by the order, Shore could not refuse compliance, but, with the best grace he could, conducted the king to the upper room.

CHAPTER IX

SHOWING ON WHAT ERRAND THE KING CAME AND HOW JANE AND HER HUSBAND WERE BIDDEN TO THE FES- TIVITIES AT WINDSOR CASTLE

Jane felt as if she should sink to the ground when the door was thrown open by her husband, and the king entered the room; but his majesty's easy and affable manner quickly reassured her.

Raising her graciously as she bent to him, Edward pressed her hand to his lips, and he paid a like gallant attention to Mistress Fordham.

After reminding Jane of his former meeting with her, he said, playfully, “I hope your husband has followed the advice I gave him on that occasion? I suppose he allows you your own way in everything? You do not look as if your inclinations were thwarted.”

“Indeed, my liege, I have no complaint to make,” replied Jane. “My husband is most indulgent to me. Mistress Fordham will tell your majesty that there is not a citizen's wife in London who has more liberty and indulgence than myself. Alban has never yet refused a request I have made to him.”

“That is much to say, in good sooth,” observed the king, “and speaks well both for you and him. We will now put his good nature to the test. Some festivities will be shortly held at Windsor Castle. The lord mayor and the lady mayoress, with the aldermen and their wives, will be our guests. You must come with them. Amongst other shows, there will be a tournament.”

“Oh, how delightful!” exclaimed Jane. “I have longed so much to see a tournament.”

“Then your desire shall now be gratified,” said Edward. “You hear, Shore. You must bring your fair wife to our castle of Windsor next week, where both she and you shall be well cared for, and see all that is to be seen.”

“I thank your majesty,” replied Shore, bowing profoundly. “Both my wife and myself are highly honored by the invitation. ’Tis more than we could expect to be included among your majesty’s guests.”

“None will be more welcome,” said Edward. “And I am sure no lovelier dame will grace the gallery of the tilt-yard. I shall not be sorry that the haughty court dames should find themselves outshone by a citizen’s wife. I have always maintained that the fairest women are to be found here in London.”

“The citizens’ wives are greatly beholden to your majesty,” observed Mistress Fordham.

“Nay, I assert the simple truth,” said the king. “But you must come with Mistress Shore to the tourney, and witness her triumph.”

Alice bent low as she signified her delighted assent.

“Will it please your majesty to take the money with you?” inquired Shore. “If so, I will give orders respecting it.”

“Prithee, do so,” rejoined the king, evidently well pleased by the suggestion.

Thereupon the goldsmith made an obeisance, and quitted the room.

No sooner was he gone than Mistress Fordham retired towards the window, so that the king and Jane were left alone together.

“The moment I have so eagerly longed for has arrived,” said Edward, taking the hand of the goldsmith’s fair wife, and gazing tenderly into her face. “I can now have a word with you. During the long interval that has elapsed, I have never ceased to think of you. In the tent, or on the field, your image has been constantly before me. I have looked upon you as my guardian angel.”

“I did not suppose your majesty ever thought of me,” said Jane. “You, who have seen so many beauties——”

“But none of them ever produced the same effect upon me as you. Tell me, sweet Jane,” he said, in the soft tones that had generally proved resistless, “have you ever thought of me?”

“Too often for my peace of mind, my liege,” she replied. “I have sometimes wished I had never beheld you.”

“Oh, say not so!” he cried. “You will have no cause to regret meeting me, for henceforward I will devote myself to you. Fate has separated us for a while, but we are now restored to each other, and we will part no more.”

“I must not listen to such language, even from your majesty,” said Jane, trembling. “You forget that I have a husband, whom I ought to love above all other men, and whose happiness depends upon me.”

“Your husband will surrender you to me,” said the king. “Nay, he must—if I so will it.”

“Your majesty may take me from him by force—but he will never yield me up. Of that I am certain,” replied Jane.

“But you will come to me of your own free will—will you not, sweetheart? From love, or pity, you must needs be mine—I cannot live without you.”

“Press me not for an answer, my liege! I dare not give it,” murmured Jane.

“Confess you love me, and I shall be satisfied!” cried Edward.

“Hist! hist!” exclaimed Alice. “There are footsteps on the stairs.”

Next moment, Shore entered the room, and if he had looked towards his wife, he must inevitably have noticed her confusion.

His attention, however, was directed to the king, who had drawn back when the warning was given by Mistress Fordham.

“All is prepared, my liege,” he said. “The bags of money will be delivered to your grooms.”

“I thank you heartily, good Master Shore,” replied Edward. “I repeat you have conferred a great boon upon me. Adieu, fair mistress!” he added, turning to Jane. “We shall soon see you again at Windsor Castle.”

“Why do you not answer?” cried Shore. “Yes, my gracious liege. I will not fail to bring her and Mistress Fordham.”

With a look at Jane, who only just dared to raise her eyes, and who almost shrank from his gaze, the king quitted the room, ceremoniously attended by Shore.

Shortly afterwards, shouts in the street proclaimed that he was mounting his charger, and Alice, who had rushed to the window, called out:

“Come hither quickly, Jane. His majesty is looking for you.”

But Jane did not stir.

A trampling was then heard, announcing the departure of the royal cavalcade. But Jane still continued motionless.

Presently Alice left the window, and Jane said to her:

“Is he gone?”

“Yes,” replied the other. “Why did you not gladden him with a parting smile? He looked back as long as he was in sight.”

“I have done wrong in listening to him, Alice,” said Jane, gravely. “I must not see him again—I will not go to Windsor.”

“Not go to Windsor!—not attend the tournament! What excuse will you make to your husband?”

“I will tell him the truth.”

“Very proper, no doubt—but extremely foolish,” cried Alice, half contemptuously. “You will only make Shore uncomfortable. If you are wise, you will hold your tongue.”

“Perhaps that may be the best course,” observed Jane. “At all events, I won’t go to Windsor.”

“We shall see,” muttered Alice.

Determined to use all her influence to frustrate Jane’s good intentions, Mistress Fordham thought it best not to say anything at the moment, feeling convinced that another and more favorable opportunity for discussing the matter would speedily arise.

She therefore took leave of her friend, promising to come next day, when she hoped to find that Jane had changed her mind.

“I don’t think I shall,” replied the goldsmith’s wife.

“Don’t decide till to-morrow,” said Alice; “and meanwhile, say nothing to Alban.”

Rather reluctantly Jane assented to the suggestion, and Alice took her departure.

CHAPTER X

HOW JANE DETERMINED NOT TO GO TO WINDSOR, AND BY WHOM HER PRUDENT RESOLVE WAS OVERRULED

Alban could not help remarking that his wife seemed thoughtful during the remainder of the day, and he was the more surprised by her pensive looks, as he expected she would have been overjoyed by the royal invitation to the tournament.

However, he did not question her on the subject, but on the following day, finding she still looked more serious than was her wont, he said, "Why so melancholy, dearest Jane? Has aught occurred to trouble you? Confide your grief to me."

"Nay, I have no grief," said Jane, trying to force a smile.

"Something is certainly upon your mind," observed Alban. "Does aught connected with the king's visit disturb you? It may be that you have some dread of appearing among the court dames, and fancy they may look down upon you. Dismiss any such notion. A goldsmith's wife may not take rank, but she cannot be slighted; and depend upon it no disrespect will be shown you. If I thought so, you should not go."

"Oh, no; you are mistaken!" she cried; "I have no fear of being treated with disrespect. But I think it will be best not to go to Windsor. Do not ask my reasons, for I cannot very well explain them. It will be a great disappointment to me not to see the tournament; but I am sure I should experience some annoyance that would do away with all my pleasure."

"Make yourself quite easy, sweetheart. The king will take care you experience no annoyance."

"That may be; but you know how censorious people are, and were his majesty to pay me any attentions, improper constructions would infallibly be put upon them."

"But if I am satisfied, you need not mind what other people say," remarked Alban. "I have too much faith in you to be jealous, even of the king."

"You are too good," cried Jane, almost overcome. "I do not deserve your confidence."

"What terrible matter have you kept back from me?" said Alban, smiling good-humoredly, and taking her hand. "Tell me, sweetheart—tell me."

"Since you will have me speak," rejoined Jane, summoning up her courage for the dreaded disclosure, "the king professes to be in love with me."

The announcement did not produce the effect she anticipated. Shore's equanimity was not in the slightest degree disturbed. On the contrary, he smiled, and said, "That is only what I expected. His majesty professes to be in love with every pretty woman he meets. Many of them are foolish enough to believe him; but I am sure that is not the case with you."

Jane made no answer, and her husband went on:

"You must not for a moment treat the matter seriously. Your safety is in indifference, real or assumed."

"But what am I to do if the king should continue to persecute me with his addresses?"

"Act as I advise, and he will soon desist," replied Shore.

Just then Mistress Fordham made her appearance.

She saw at a glance how matters stood, and though she blamed Jane's imprudence, she was glad to find that Alban seemed so unconcerned.

"Jane has just let me into a secret," he said; "but I dare say it is no secret to you. She tells me the king is in love

with her. Knowing his character, I should be surprised if he were not. His passion gives me no sort of uneasiness, because I feel sure it will never be reciprocated. Jane's affection for me could no more be shaken than could mine for her."

"I admire your calmness, sir," rejoined Mistress Fordham. "You view the matter most sensibly. I have always said you are the best of husbands, and you now prove the truth of my assertion. You are quite right in the good opinion you entertain of your wife. Rest assured she will never deceive you."

"I am certain of it," replied Shore. "I should be sorry she stayed away from any mistaken apprehension of the king's designs, which, if contemplated, can easily be baffled."

"I will do whatever you desire," said Jane.

"Spoken like a dutiful wife," he cried. "Since the matter is settled, I will now tell you that I have just seen the lord mayor. Hearing we are invited to the royal festivities, he offers to take us in his barge to Windsor."

"Oh! that will be delightful!" exclaimed Jane.

"Then you will not blame me for accepting the offer?" remarked Shore.

"Blame you? Oh, no. I should have been grieved if you had declined it. Nothing could please me better than such a trip. But Alice must go with us."

"That is arranged. There will be a large party on board the barge, consisting of the aldermen and their wives, and some other important citizens. I think you will find it amusing."

"I am sure I shall," cried Jane, who was now radiant with delight. "His majesty seems very desirous to please the citizens."

"He wishes to show his gratitude for the substantial aid they have given him towards the projected invasion of

France," replied Shore. "But I must now leave you, sweetheart. I have some matters of business to attend to."

Well pleased at having brought back the smiles to his wife's fair cheek, he then quitted the room.

"Was there ever such an obliging husband!" exclaimed Alice.

"Never, I am certain," replied Jane. "I should be culpable, indeed, were I to betray his trust in me!"

CHAPTER XI

OF THE GOODLY COMPANY ASSEMBLED IN THE LORD MAYOR'S BARGE

Very lovely was the morn on which Jane and her husband, with Mistress Fordham, stepped on board the lord mayor's barge.

At the prow of the burnished vessel floated a large silken banner, emblazoned with the city arms. The oarsmen were clad in rich liveries; several pages were in attendance; and trumpeters in embroidered tunics and velvet caps, made the towers on the bridge ring with the bruit of their silver clarions.

Already the principal part of the company was assembled, and the grand saloon of the barge hung with silken curtains, and provided with velvet-cushioned seats, presented a splendid sight, being filled with the wives of the sheriffs and aldermen, and some other city dames, all of whom wore rich attire and costly ornaments; collars of gold round the neck, and girdles set with precious stones.

Tall steeple caps, with large butterfly wings attached to them, predominated among the fair assemblage; but a few crescent head-dresses could be seen.

At the upper end of the saloon, and conspicuous by the amplitude of her person, as well as by the splendor of her apparel and ornaments, sat the lady mayoress.

A prodigiously fine woman. No wonder her full-blown charms had attracted the king's admiration. Her dress consisted of a crimson velvet gown, richly embroidered, and a large turban-shaped head-dress, adorned with pearls.

The other ladies were, likewise, splendidly dressed, and several of them possessed considerable personal attractions; but there was not one who did not flatter herself that she had been the special object of the gallant king's regards. To gain the good will of the citizens, Edward made love to their wives, and, judging by the result, the plan succeeded.

The lord mayor was arrayed in crimson velvet, and had a furred velvet cap on his head, and a gold baldrick round his neck. The sheriffs and aldermen wore scarlet gowns, with purple hoods, and the splendor of their habiliments added to the brilliant appearance of the assemblage. Moreover, as we have intimated, there were several wealthy citizens among the company, and they were all richly attired.

Jane drew all eyes upon her as she entered, and was conducted to the upper end of the saloon by the lord mayor. She was very charmingly dressed in a gown of blue velvet, trimmed with fur; and in lieu of a steeple cap, she wore a roll of white silk, through the centre of which her fair tresses were allowed to pass, and flow down her back. A murmur of admiration arose as she passed on, for there was a witchery about her that was quite irresistible, and the ladies were forced to admit the supremacy of her beauty.

She was very graciously received by the lady mayoress, who assigned her a place near her own seat. This attention was the more marked, as the stately dame's manner towards Mistress Fordham was exceedingly stiff and distant.

A few more arrivals took place, and then, the whole party being assembled, the gorgeous vessel commenced the ascent

of the river, amid the clangor of trumpets, and the shouts of the throng congregated on the wharf.

At first, the progress of the barge was slow—intentionally so, perhaps—and it was a very pretty sight to watch it as it moved on, accompanied by a crowd of smaller barques, nearly all of which were occupied by persons in holiday apparel.

It being understood by the occupants of the barques that the fair Mistress Shore was on board the barge, great curiosity was manifested to obtain a glimpse of her. But this was not so easily accomplished, since Jane was hidden by those around her; and it was not till she was subsequently brought on deck by the lord mayor, that she was recognized, and welcomed by a loud shout.

As the day was remarkably fine, a delightful excursion could be calculated upon; and having this pleasant prospect before them, the company were all in high spirits, and nothing was heard in the saloon, or on deck, but lively sallies and laughter.

A water-party, at the time of which we treat, must have been remarkably agreeable; the river being then perfectly clear, and its banks free from all unsightly structures. Indeed, from London Bridge to the old Palace of Westminster, built by Edward the Confessor, and greatly enlarged by the then reigning monarch, a constant succession of picturesque buildings delighted the eye.

Higher up, charming prospects opened on the view; quaint habitations, constituting a small village, and each village boasting a church; ancient mansions, half hidden by trees; gardens with terraces; and smooth lawns, sloping down to the water's edge; gray convents, and other monastic-looking houses; parks with long, sweeping glades, amidst which herds of deer could be descried; such were the principal features of the scenery, through which ran the bright, pellucid river.

Jane was enchanted. Often had she made a little voyage

on the Thames, but never under circumstances more agreeable—never on a finer day.

Moreover, the greatest court was paid her—the lord mayor and all the principal personages vieing with each other in attention.

Having breasted the silver current for several miles, the barge had now brought its company to a most lovely region, that still retains its pristine beauty, though lacking, of course, the quiet and secluded character which then distinguished it.

The river was now flowing past a lovely hill, partially clothed with wood. From the summit of the eminence an unequalled prospect could be obtained over a vast plain, then so thickly covered with timber that it resembled a forest. At intervals the river could be traced as it winded its way through the plain, and the distant view was bounded by the towers of Windsor Castle.

Nearer could be seen the antique village of Kingston, with its reverend church.

The exceeding beauty of the river banks at this point—the verdant slopes and noble trees on the left, the lovely meads on the right—all combined to form a most exquisite picture.

CHAPTER XII

HOW THEY WERE ENTERTAINED AT SHENE PALACE, AND HOW MALBOUCHE, THE KING'S JESTER, CAME ON BOARD THE BARGE, AND WHAT PASSED BETWEEN HIM AND JANE

Shortly afterwards, the royal mansion of Shene, hitherto screened from observation by the intervening woods, came into view, and formed a most striking object with its grand *façade*, its immense bay windows, battlements, and turrets.

Nothing could be finer than the situation of Shene Palace, the windows of which commanded the magnificent prospect just described, while its garden and terrace extended along the margin of the river.

As the barge approached the stately pile, a boat put off from the landing-place, having on board a chamberlain and three or four serving-men in the royal livery.

At a sign from the chamberlain, the barge was stopped, and the official, respectfully saluting the lord mayor, invited him and the rest of the party, in the king's name, to enter the palace, and partake of some refreshment.

The invitation was readily accepted, and the company having landed, were conducted by the chamberlain to the great banqueting-hall, where a splendid collation was laid out for them. At the same time he explained that these preparations had been made by his majesty's commands. Half an hour being spent over the repast, the lord mayor and those with him returned to the barge, very well satisfied with their entertainment.

An addition was here made to the party in the person of Malbouche, the king's favorite jester. As Malbouche was proceeding to Windsor Castle to join his royal master, he begged to be taken on board the barge, and of course his request was readily granted. Moreover, he was not placed with the other servants, but was allowed to remain on deck with the company, and he amused them very much by his caustic remarks.

Malbouche's grotesque attire proclaimed his office. On his head he wore a cockscomb, and carried a bauble in his hand. Over his shoulder was suspended a broad baldrick hung with silver bells. The royal badge was embroidered in front, and at the back of his scarlet cloth tunic, which had loose hanging sleeves lined with white. His hose were parti-colored, red and white.

Short and round-shouldered, Malbouche had an ill-favored

countenance, marked by a decidedly malicious expression, and lighted up by a pair of piercing black eyes.

Like all jesters, Malbouche was privileged to say what he pleased, even to his royal master, and he took full advantage of the license.

"What hast thou been doing at Shene, my merry knave?" said the lord mayor to him.

"I came here on important business, my lord," replied Malbouche. "I was sent by my royal master to see that your lordship and those with you were fittingly entertained."

"Why did his majesty select thee for the office? Thou art scarce suited to it," observed the lord mayor.

"The king is a better judge than your lordship," rejoined Malbouche. "Besides, I knew that fair Mistress Shore was to be of the party, and I wished to behold her."

"Were that really thine object, thou hast come on a very foolish errand," observed Jane.

"Not so," replied Malbouche. "I rarely pay compliments. But I have seen a marvel. The king had said much of you, but all he said fell short of the truth."

"Pooh! thou art turned flatterer," remarked Jane.

"You will not think so, fair mistress, when you know me better," rejoined the jester. "The court dames and damsels give me a very different character. Take advice, fair mistress, and stay not long at Windsor, or you are never like to return. Were I Master Shore, I would not have brought you at all."

"Thou art a disloyal knave to say so," observed the goldsmith.

"And you are over-confident," replied Malbouche. "I warrant me you would not expose your brightest jewel to a band of robbers."

"Dost compare thy royal master and his nobles to a band of robbers?" observed Shore.

"An' your jewel be lost, you will cry out that it is stolen," remarked the jester.

“Why dost thou not give like caution to others besides me?” observed Shore.

“Because none of them have such a precious gem,” was the rejoinder.

The goldsmith said no more, fearing the jester might make some further sarcastic remark calculated to give offence to the city dignitaries.

Presently, Malbouche observed to the lord mayor :

“Shall I tell your lordship why you are all bidden to Windsor? ’Tis that the king expects an answer from his royal cousin, Louis of France, to whom he has sent a defiance by Garter king-at-arms.”

“That is no secret,” replied the lord mayor. “The citizens of London are ready and willing to aid his majesty in a war with France. Normandy and Guienne belong to us of right, and we would gladly recover them.”

“Then the king is wiser than I deemed in embarking in the war,” observed the jester. “But what of James of Scotland? Will he not take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded him to invade England?”

“We have a truce with the King of Scotland,” rejoined the lord mayor. “There is nothing to fear from him.”

“If he break not the truce, I will send him my fool’s cap,” said Malbouche.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW THE KING AND QUEEN, WITH THE LORDS AND LADIES OF THE COURT, RETURNED FROM HAWKING IN THE FOREST

Meanwhile, they had gradually neared Windsor Castle, and were now passing by the Home Park, the beautiful woods of which grew down to the margin of the river.

Jane had long been gazing at the proud regal structure, which she now beheld for the first time. Much as she had heard of it, its grandeur far surpassed all her preconceived notions.

From the eminence on which the lordly pile was reared, it seemed to look down majestically on the surrounding plain. The royal standard floated from the keep, and a party of armed men could be seen on the northern terrace.

On the right of the river, surrounded by trees, was the College of Eton, founded some five-and-thirty years previously by the unfortunate Henry VI. But Jane's gaze remained fixed upon the castle, and she could look at nothing else till they reached the wharf near the bridge.

Here half a dozen magnificent chariots, with richly caparisoned horses attached to them, were waiting to convey the lord mayor and the rest of the party to the castle. Mounted grooms and henchmen, apparelled in the royal liveries, were likewise in attendance. The foremost chariot was assigned to the lord mayor, but at the special request of the lady mayoress, Jane and her husband, with Mistress Fordham, rode with them.

As soon as the equipages were filled, the cavalcade made its way through the old town, and, mounting the steep street

that led past the walls of the castle, came to a gateway, flanked by strong towers, leading to the basement court. They did not, however, enter the court, but, by the directions of the officer in attendance, proceeded to the great park, where the king had pitched his pavilion.

Driving past the south terrace of the castle, they presently turned off into a long avenue bordered by magnificent trees, and having tracked it for about a quarter of a mile, came to an opening on the right, that admitted them to a large clear space, in the midst of which was the royal pavilion. Fashioned of red velvet, lined with silk, and embroidered all over in gold, with the king's cognizance—the "rose en soleil"—it presented a superb appearance.

Accustomed to camp life, Edward liked it during fine weather; and hence, though he had the noblest castle in the realm close at hand, he chose to pitch his tent in the forest.

But the place was deserted at the time of the arrival of the lord mayor and his party, for his majesty and the queen were hawking in the forest with the lords and ladies of the court. However, the new-comers had only just alighted, and were still collected in front of the royal pavilion, when word was given that the king was returning, and immediately afterwards a numerous and splendid party could be seen approaching through the trees.

At the head of the cavalcade, which comprised, as just intimated, all the principal lords and ladies of the court, as well as the two royal dukes, rode the king and queen.

Edward was magnificently dressed, as usual. His tunic was of green velvet, embroidered with gold, and trimmed with sable. His cap was likewise of green velvet, adorned with a heron's plume, and a silver bugle hung from his shoulder. Attached to his girdle was a wood-knife. His courser was splendidly equipped, but not so much so as to impede the action of the high-mettled animal.

The queen, who rode a snow-white palfrey, trapped in

cloth of gold, embroidered with white roses, was exceedingly handsome ; but her features had a very haughty expression, and her fine eyes had sometimes a sinister look. Her tresses were still light and luxuriant, and her figure faultless. Personally, she was quite as attractive as when the king first beheld her, and became so passionately enamored of her that he married her despite all opposition.

To Edward's credit, it must be stated that, although he had long ceased to love his consort, he paid her the utmost deference. On her part, the queen manifested no jealousy, though quite aware of his numerous infidelities, being perfectly content with the homage he paid her in public. Owing to this judicious course, they had no quarrels, and Elizabeth never lost her influence over her royal husband. Her great desire was to aggrandize her own family ; and she succeeded so well in the aim, enriching her father, ennobling her brother, and exalting her sisters by marrying them into the proudest families, that she incurred the animosity of all the old nobility. Confident, however, of Edward's support, she set them completely at defiance.

The queen was arrayed in a tight-fitting long-waisted *côte-hardie* of *baudekin*. Over the gown, which was so long that it quite concealed her pointed shoes, she wore a furred mantle, which displayed her charming figure to perfection. It is needless to describe the costly ornaments with which she was bedecked, the jewels running down the centre of her gown, or the splendor of her girdle and collar ; but we must mention that her hair was confined by a golden comb, with large and preposterous side ornaments, like wings, attached to it.

The queen was attended by a score of ladies, almost all of whom were young and beautiful, and made a splendid show on their mettlesome palfreys.

The costume of these fair dames and damsels was somewhat varied, but they had one feature in common peculiar to the period—namely, the tall steeple cap.

With the queen were the two young princesses, Elizabeth and Cicely, both very pretty girls. They rode what were then called hobby-horses, and managed them extremely well.

Mingled with the ladies of the court were an equal number of nobles and distinguished personages, chief amongst whom were the king's two brothers, George, Duke of Clarence, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Neither of them possessed Edward's lofty stature, handsome physiognomy, or majestic deportment. Indeed, the Duke of Gloucester was deformed and crook-backed, by which epithet he was constantly distinguished.

The Duke of Clarence, who was not yet thirty, was slight, but well-formed, and had a noble countenance; the expression, however, of his eyes was shifting, and betrayed his treacherous character. His habiliments were splendid, and he was mounted on a fiery steed.

Some seven or eight years previously, the Duke of Clarence had espoused Isabella, eldest daughter of the great Earl of Warwick, surnamed the "King Maker," and who, in fact, had enabled Edward to obtain the crown. Soon after his alliance, the ambitious young duke, who secretly aspired to the throne, revolted against his brother. True to no one, however, he deserted Warwick at the most critical juncture, and joining his brother with several thousand men, enabled him to win the battle of Barnet, at which Warwick was slain.

The Duchess of Clarence was amongst the ladies, but there was no cordiality between her and the queen. At the time of her marriage, the duchess was considered very handsome; but she now looked pale and thin, and appeared far from happy. Could she be happy, indeed, when she knew that the duke, her husband, had betrayed her father, and caused his death!

But if Clarence was perfidious, he was not half so dangerous as his brother, the dark, deceitful Gloucester. Clarence had not the talent to conceal his designs, but Gloucester, who

was equally treacherous, was a deep dissembler, and worked in secret. Though the throne seemed completely shut out from him, he determined to mount it, and nothing turned him from his purpose.

To look at that bold, crafty visage, in every line of which cunning was written ; to feel the effect of that dark, searching eye, caused those who came near him to comprehend that they were in the presence of a master spirit. Gloucester could not inspire regard ; but he inspired dread. Men hated him, but served him well, because they feared him. Even Edward experienced the force of his determined will.

Gloucester would have been of the average height had not his crooked back diminished his stature by several inches. In other respects, he was well-proportioned, and strongly built. His features were decidedly handsome, though the expression was sinister. His complexion and hair were dark, and his eyes exceedingly fine, and their glances full of fire. Not only did Gloucester possess the wisdom of the serpent, but the venom. Courageous, and a good leader, he never hesitated to attack a superior force.

There was no love between him and the Duke of Clarence, whom he had deeply offended by his marriage with Anne, the younger daughter of the Earl of Warwick, and widow of Prince Edward, son of Margaret of Anjou, and the unfortunate Henry VI. Having helped to despatch the young prince, after the battle of Tewkesbury, which sealed the fate of the Lancastrian party, Gloucester resolved to marry the princess, and succeeded in his design, notwithstanding all the efforts of Clarence to prevent him.

By this match, Gloucester secured a large portion of Warwick's immense possessions, and laughed at his brother's displeasure. A long and bitter dispute ensued, which at length was settled by the king, but from that time the brothers nourished a deadly animosity towards each other.

Gloucester was as fond of dress as the king, and wore the

richest stuffs and the most splendid ornaments. His embroidered mantle was so disposed as to hide his hunchback as much as possible. His black velvet cap was adorned with gems.

It would seem scarcely possible that the Princess Anne could endure the man who had slain her husband, and forced her into a marriage that at first had appeared hateful to her; but Gloucester had so won upon her regard, that she now seemed to like him. She was among the queen's ladies, and rode by the side of the Duchess of Clarence.

The Princess Anne was far handsomer than her sister, and to judge from her countenance was disturbed by no secret grief. Her attire was very sumptuous. She wore a *côte-hardie* of blue velvet, and her girdle was studded with gems. Passionately fond of hawking and of the chase, she had greatly enjoyed the day's pastime.

Of the nobles who composed the king's suite, we may enumerate the Duke of Buckingham, the Marquis of Dorset, the Lord Hastings, the Lord Rivers, the queen's brother, the Lords Howard and Stanley, Sir Thomas Montgomery, and Sir Thomas St. Leger—the latter being a great favorite with the king. All these nobles and gentlemen were attired in hunting dresses of green velvet, embroidered with gold, and were mounted on fleet, well-bred coursers.

At the rear of the cavalcade came the falconers, carrying the hawks in their hoods and jesses; and the huntsmen, with the hounds in leash. These, with a great number of grooms, piquers, and pages, completed the splendid train.

CHAPTER XIV

*OF THE GRAND COLLATION GIVEN IN THE PAVILION; AND
OF THE STRANGE PRESENT BROUGHT BY GARTER
FROM LOUIS OF FRANCE*

As the king entered the open space, and perceived the lord mayor and his party stationed near the royal pavilion, he rode forward, and offered them a most gracious welcome. While distributing his smiles among the bevy of fair dames, he bestowed a special greeting on Jane.

Shortly afterwards the queen came up, and the lord mayor and the lady mayoress were presented by the king to her majesty, who expressed herself delighted to see them. Some other presentations then took place, and during these formalities, the nobles and ladies composing the cavalcade dismounted, and their coursers and palfreys were led away by the grooms.

Having welcomed his guests, Edward sprang from his charger, and bidding them follow him without ceremony, took the hand of the lady mayoress, and conducted her to the pavilion, in which a splendid collation was laid out. They were followed by the queen and the lord mayor; and pursuing the example thus set them, the royal dukes and the nobles each selected a citizen's wife, while the sheriffs and aldermen were honored by court dames. Jane fell to the share of the lord chamberlain, who took care to place her near his royal master.

Though a rigorous observer of regal etiquette, Edward would sometimes dispense with it altogether, as on this occasion, when, his great object being to conciliate the citizens, he treated them with unwonted familiarity. At the same

time, though excessively affable, he was dignified in deportment, as usual.

The interior of the pavilion was splendid, as it was roofed with cloth of gold. The tables were covered with plate, and there was a superb buffet. The daintiest fare and the most exquisite wines were set before the guests.

At the close of the repast, the king caused a large goblet to be filled by his cup-bearer, and drank to the lord mayor and the citizens. After which, they all rose, and pledged his majesty in return.

"You are aware, my good and faithful lieges," said the king to the citizens, "that we have sent a herald to our cousin, Louis of France, to signify to him that he must forthwith restore to us the duchies of Guienne and Normandy, and if he refuses to do so, we will make war upon him, and invade his dominions with all our power. We shall soon know what answer Louis hath sent, for Garter, the herald, as we learn, hath returned to London from his embassy, and is on the way hither."

At this juncture, Malbouche, who was stationed at the back of the king's seat, whispered something in his majesty's ear.

"Say'st thou that Garter has arrived?" cried Edward.

"Yea, my liege," replied the jester, speaking in a loud voice, so that all around might hear. "And he hath brought your majesty some presents. King Louis hath sent you the best horse in his stables, and a noble steed it is. But that is not all—he hath sent your majesty something more."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Edward. "Doth he think to pacify me with gifts?"

"There is much significance in the present," replied Malbouche. "But here comes the herald, who will give your majesty all needful explanation."

As he spoke, Garter appeared at the entrance of the pavilion, and way was made him to approach the king.

"Thou art welcome from France!" cried Edward, as the

herald bent profoundly. "Hast thou made our demand of King Louis? Speak out! We desire that all should hear his answer."

"King Louis's answer was very brief, my liege," rejoined Garter. "He received me very well, and manifested neither anger nor impatience while I made my demand. When I had done, he regarded me fixedly, and somewhat sternly, and remarked, 'Tell the king our cousin that we counsel him to do nothing.' That was all he said. In token of his friendly feeling towards your majesty, he hath sent you the best horse in his stables."

"Aught more?" inquired Edward.

"Yes, my liege," replied Garter, with some hesitation. "Just before my departure he sent his quartermaster, Messire Jean de Lailler, with a wolf, a wild boar, and an ass, as a further present to your majesty."

"Ha!" exclaimed Edward, angrily. "Now, by St. George! that seems like a studied insult."

"'Twas doubtless intended as an apologue," remarked Malbouche. "Methinks I can explain it. The wolf is your majesty—a vile comparison, doubtless—the wild boar is Charles the Bold of Burgundy, and the ass is the Duke of Bretagne."

Incensed as he was, Edward could not help laughing at the jester's explanation, and some half-suppressed merriment was heard among the company.

"Our cousin of France shall find that his jest is ill-timed," said the king. "Our preparations for the invasion are complete, and, by St. George! we will soon set foot in his dominions."

At this announcement loud acclamations arose from the assemblage, and it was evident that the nobles and citizens were of one mind in regard to the war.

Soon after this the king arose and quitted the pavilion, taking the lady mayoress with him. His majesty was followed

by the queen, the lord mayor, and the rest of the splendid company.

Shortly afterwards, the queen entered her chariot with the two princesses, and was driven to the castle, whither other chariots followed, filled by the Duchesses of Clarence and Gloucester, and other noble dames.

CHAPTER XV

HOW JANE PROMISED THE KING AN ANSWER AT THE BALL

The festivities of the day were not yet ended. A grand ball was to be given in the evening at the castle, to which all were looking forward with delight.

A great portion of the company proceeded to the castle on foot, and they could now be seen shaping their course thither beneath the trees.

As the evening was delightful, nothing could be more agreeable than the walk, and Jane, who was accompanied by her husband and Mistress Fordham, enjoyed it greatly.

They had just entered the great avenue, and were proceeding slowly along the gentle ascent leading to the castle, which rose before them in all its grandeur, when the trampling of horses was heard behind, and the king was seen approaching, accompanied by Lord Hastings and some half-dozen grooms.

As soon as he came up to Jane, the king dismounted, and consigned his horse to a groom, while Hastings engaged Shore and Mistress Fordham in conversation. The grooms kept at a respectful distance.

As may be supposed, the enamored monarch did not lose the opportunity, but protested his passion in the most ardent terms.

"You have heard what has just passed," he said. "I am about to invade France with a large army. You shall go with me, and you will then be really queen."

Jane was dazzled by the brilliant prospect opened before her.

"Could I believe that your majesty would really devote yourself to me, I might be induced to consent. But no, no!" she interrupted; "I must not—cannot."

"Do not decide too hastily," he said. "Give me your answer at the ball to-night."

"My answer will still be the same, my liege," she replied, trembling.

"I hope not," he rejoined. "Think what you will throw away! But I must not continue this converse, lest I should excite your husband's suspicions. Adieu for the present."

At a sign, his horse was instantly brought him by the groom, and he rode off with Hastings towards the castle.

Meanwhile, Shore had returned to his wife. Fixing a melancholy look upon her, he said:

"I cannot mistake the nature of his majesty's attentions to you, Jane. He loves you, and has told you of his love."

Jane made no reply; but her silence convinced him he was right in the surmise.

"You must not be exposed to this danger," he said. "You shall not enter the castle."

"You are needlessly alarmed," said Jane. "I should be sorry to miss this grand ball. To-morrow I shall be quite willing to return, but not now."

"To-morrow may be too late," muttered Shore. "I have made up my mind that you shall go at once."

"But I am quite sure the king will not permit our departure," she said.

"He will know nothing about it till we are far hence," rejoined Shore, peremptorily.

"Alice," cried Jane, to Mistress Fordham, "what do you think? Alban says we must go back immediately."

"Not stay for the ball!" exclaimed Mistress Fordham. "It would not only be a great disappointment to us, but a positive disrespect to his majesty. Were I you, I would positively refuse to go."

"You counsel badly, mistress," remarked Shore, angrily. "Jane will obey me."

Alice gave her a look, encouraging her not to yield.

"I never knew you so unreasonable before, Alban," said Jane. "You have ever treated me with the greatest kindness, and indulged all my fancies. But now you would deprive me of a gratification on which I have set my heart."

"You know my motive, Jane," he cried, in a reproachful tone.

"Yes. But I do not admit it. Dismiss these silly fears. No harm will ensue."

"Since you give me that positive assurance, I will trust in you," he said.

"Then you consent to stay for the ball?" she cried eagerly.

"Very reluctantly," he replied. "I have a presentiment of ill."

"Nonsense!" cried Mistress Fordham. "If the king really meant to rob you of your beautiful wife, do you think she would be safe in Lombard street?"

"Make yourself easy, Alban," said Jane. "The king is very powerful, but he shall not take me from you."

"I am content with that promise," he rejoined. "We will stay for the ball."

And they proceeded to the castle.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW JOUSTS WERE HELD IN THE LOWER COURT OF WINDSOR CASTLE; HOW THE PRIZE WAS BESTOWED ON JANE BY THE MARQUIS OF DORSET; WHAT OCCURRED AT THE BALL; AND HOW SHORE LEFT HIS WIFE

On entering the upper ward of the castle, Shore, with his wife and Mistress Fordham, were met by the chamberlain, who conducted them to apartments on the north side of the quadrangle. Here they found their trunks, which had been brought from the barge, and by the time they had made the necessary change in their attire, they were summoned to a magnificent repast, which was served in St. George's Hall. The king and queen, with the royal dukes and duchesses, were seated at a raised table, and in the centre of the room sat the principal nobles and ladies.

Supper over, the company adjourned to a large apartment, which was brilliantly lighted up. Jane was quite bewildered by the splendor of the scene. The king had now laid aside his mantle, and appeared in a blue velvet tunic richly embroidered with gold. Amongst his other accomplishments, Edward excelled in dancing, and on this occasion he selected his partners from the wives of the citizens.

Jane's turn came at last, and when the bransle was over, he led her to a room opening out of the hall, which seemed to be empty at the time.

Thinking they were entirely alone, Edward addressed a few passionate words to her, and said, "Now, then, sweetheart, I must have your answer. Will you remain with me?"

Ere she could reply, they were disturbed by the unexpected appearance of Shore, who had followed her into the room.

Edward signed to him angrily to be gone, but he did not move.

“I am ready to obey you, my liege,” he said; “but I must take my wife with me. Come, madam,” he added, to Jane, who, however, hesitated and consulted the king by a look.

“I shall not interpose my authority,” said Edward. “Mistress Shore is free to depart if she thinks proper. Do as you please, madam,” he added to Jane.

“Then I will stay,” she rejoined.

“Since this is your decision, Jane, farewell forever!” said Alban, in a reproachful tone. “You know how fondly I have loved you. But I now put you from me. You are no longer mine.”

He looked at her for a moment fixedly, hoping she might relent; but as she did not stir, he made an obeisance to the king, and quitted the apartment.

“Do not let him go, my liege,” said Jane. “I shall be miserable if he departs in this mood.”

“Methinks you are far better without him, sweetheart,” said the king; “but since you desire it, I will give orders that he be not allowed to quit the castle.”

With this he led her back to the ball-room, and, summoning the lord chamberlain, gave him some directions in a low tone.

Next morning a sumptuous breakfast was given at the royal hunting lodge in the Home Park, to which all the guests were invited, and after the repast, they were taken to see the vineyard.

Our climate must certainly have been better in the fifteenth century than now-a-days, since grapes from which tolerable wine was made were then grown at Windsor.

The vineyard was situated on a slope facing the south, so that the grapes had the full benefit of the sun, and now hung in ripening clusters from the trellised vines. With the

gay crowd wandering about the alleys, the enclosure presented a very charming picture.

After another banquet in St. George's Hall, the whole company repaired to the jousts. Barriers were here erected in the lower ward, and overlooking them was a superb gallery, hung with blue velvet, and embroidered with white roses. This gallery was reserved for the queen, the two duchesses, the court dames, the lady mayoress, and the wives of the citizens.

A large crowd was collected round the barriers, and the vast court was filled with knights, pages, esquires, and halberdiers, all in the royal livery.

Loud fanfares of trumpets were sounded as the king came forth, equipped in a full suit of shining mail, with a snowy plume in his helm, and mounted on a charger trapped in cloth of gold, adorned with his cognizance.

His majesty was attended by the Duke of Buckingham, the Lords Howard, Dorset, and Stanley, Sir Thomas Montgomery, and Sir John Cheyne, all clad in armor, and all well mounted.

As soon as the king had taken his position on one side of the lists, the trumpets were again sounded, and the Duke of Clarence, the Earl of Rivers, the Lord Hastings, all clad in armor, and attended by half-a-dozen knights and gentlemen, rode into the lists.

The two parties having ridden past the central part of the gallery, in which were the queen with the two royal duchesses and the two princesses, and bowed to her majesty, took their places on either side of the lists. Jane sat with the ladies of the lady mayoress's party.

Shortly afterwards the trumpets were sounded, and the signal being given by the king, two knights clapped spurs into their steeds, and rode against each other.

These were the Lord Howard and the Lord Rivers. They met in mid-career, and both lances were splintered, but neither cavalier was unhorsed.

They were followed by the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Hastings, with pretty nearly the same result ; except, perhaps, that the advantage was slightly in favor of Hastings.

Next the Duke of Clarence and the youthful Marquis of Dorset, the queen's son by her first husband, Sir John Gray, ran against each other, and a general murmur of satisfaction arose when the youthful marquis, who was exceedingly handsome, struck off the duke's helmet.

Clarence did not bear his defeat with a good grace, but looked highly displeased.

Many more lances were splintered, but good fortune attended the young Marquis of Dorset, who unhorsed one of the knights on the side of the Duke of Clarence, and at length was adjudged the victor by the king.

Amid the plaudits of the assemblage, the shouts of the heralds, and the clangor of trumpets, the youthful Earl rode towards the royal gallery, and as he bent before the queen, she hung a wreath of white roses on the point of his lance.

The handsome young noble glanced round the bevy of beauties, as if considering on whom he should bestow the prize, and many a bosom throbbed high at that moment ; but as there could be no question that the fairest amid the throng was Jane, he rode up to the part of the gallery where she was stationed, and, lowering the point of his lance, presented the wreath to her.

Loud applause followed, as Jane took the prize thus gracefully offered her, and the king seemed particularly well pleased.

Some other diversions followed, after which the queen and all the ladies withdrew, and returned to their apartments in the castle.

In the evening there was a grand supper in St. George's Hall, and when the company had feasted royally, a pleasant surprise was given to the ladies.

The great doors of the hall being thrown open, a troop of

sirens came in, singing melodiously. They were followed, after a short interval, by an immense sea-monster, which, from its size, caused the greatest astonishment and even terror among the female beholders. How the huge fish was moved could not be understood, the mechanism being hidden; but it seemed to roll, or rather swim, into the hall, without even being guided, only moving its tail and fins.

On reaching the centre of the hall, the monster opened its enormous jaws, and forth came a troop of mermaids and mermen, who performed a grotesque dance, while the sirens sang, amid the merriment of the company.

This exhibition ended, the dancers returned to their retreat, and the huge sea-monster quickly disappeared from the hall.

Other amusements followed, after which the company adjourned to the ball-room, where dancing instantly commenced.

No opportunity occurred to the king that night for any private converse with Jane; but next morning, at an early hour, he repaired to her apartments.

Mistress Fordham was with her, but she seemed to be in a state of great distress, and when Edward appeared, she rushed towards him, and threw herself at his feet.

"My husband has really left me, my liege," she cried, "and has forbidden me to return to him."

"Give yourself no concern about him," he replied, raising her gently. "You shall remain with me. Listen to me, sweetheart," he continued. "You like the Hunting Lodge in the Home Park? Is it not so?"

"I have seen nothing so charming, my liege," she replied.

"'Tis yours. Take possession of it at once. You shall have your own servants, and everything you can desire. Thus much for Windsor. At Shene, at Whitehall, at Eltham, at the Tower, wherever I may be, you shall have your own apartments."

Her thanks were murmured in a low voice.

“My sole desire is to make you happy, Jane,” he said.

Something like a sigh was her response.

“Why that sigh?” he inquired, gazing at her tenderly.

“I am thinking of poor Alban,” she replied.

“Think of him no more,” said Edward. “You are now mine, and shall be ever with me. When I embark for France you shall accompany me.”

“And your majesty will not abandon me?” cried she, gazing at him imploringly.

“Never!” cried Edward, fervently. “Never! I swear it!”

“Bear witness to the vow, Alice,” cried Jane.

“Ay, bear witness!” said Edward; “and call me false and perjured if I break it. But that I will never do.”

“I will trust you,” replied Jane, and her head sank upon his shoulder.

Ere many hours she was installed at the Hunting Lodge.

BOOK II

THE EXPEDITION TO FRANCE

CHAPTER I

HOW JANE RESIDED AT THE HUNTING LODGE IN THE HOME PARK, AND HOW KING EDWARD PREPARED TO INVADE FRANCE

“The king seems infatuated with Mistress Shore,” observed the Duke of Buckingham to Lord Hastings, as they walked together one morning in the upper quadrangle of Windsor Castle. “Think you she will retain her influence over him?”

“For many reasons, I think she will,” replied Hastings. “In the first place, she is incomparably beautiful, and beauty weighs much with the king, as you know. But she has something more than beauty to recommend her. Her disposition is most amiable, and her manner extremely engaging. She is always ready to do a service to anyone who needs it. Her influence over the king is unbounded, but she does not abuse it. What is most surprising is that she has embraced the queen’s part, and does all in her power to further her majesty’s plans.”

“Is it from interest or good feeling that she acts thus?” inquired Buckingham. “You know I have been away, so that I have not yet had any opportunity for observation.”

“’Tis from goodness of heart,” replied Hastings. “Mrs. Shore, as I have just said, is the most amiable person living. She has more suitors than the queen herself. Everyone who has a favor to ask, or a petition to present, comes to her. The king can refuse her nothing; yet she asks little for herself. She might soon grow rich if she chose; but she gives away almost all she receives. His majesty bestows the richest

dresses upon her, costly ornaments, diamonds and plate, and has given her an almost regal establishment at the Lodge; but, by my faith! I believe she does not desire it, but would rather live less ostentatiously."

"You amaze me," said Buckingham. "I did not think such a woman existed."

"Certes, there are few like her," rejoined Hastings, laughing. "She has many enemies, no doubt, foremost among whom are Clarence and Gloucester; but they are unable to do her any injury. The queen, as I have hinted, is favorable to her, and wisely declares that as the king must have a favorite, she would rather it should be Mistress Shore than any other."

"But what of Shore? Is he reconciled to the loss of his beautiful wife?"

"Since she has left him, he has disappeared altogether," replied Hastings.

"Disappeared!" exclaimed Buckingham.

"Ay; he has sold his house in Lombard-street, all his plate and jewels, has discharged all his servants, and gone—no one knows whither. 'Tis said he has become a monk, but this is doubtful. He was devoted to his wife, and her abandonment of him seems to have disturbed his reason."

"Only a fool would grieve for a woman who leaves him," said Buckingham. "A sensible husband would have reconciled himself to the loss, and have reaped all the benefit he could from it. With Jane's help he might have risen at court."

"Evidently he disdained such a course. But let us go to the Lodge. You will find the king there. His majesty desires that as much respect shall be paid Mistress Shore as if she were actually queen."

"I understand," replied Buckingham.

Passing through the postern near Edward the Third's tower, and crossing the drawbridge over the moat, they proceeded to the Lodge, which was situated in the Home Park.

A pleasant walk through the vineyard brought them to the garden, which was beautifully laid out.

On the terrace in front of the Hunting Lodge, several pages in the royal liveries were grouped, conversing with the king's falconers, who had their hawks in readiness. On the right were grooms, with a splendid charger and a beautiful palfrey. Halberdiers were stationed at the entrance, and within were a gentleman usher, and a number of serving-men.

Preceded by the usher, the two nobles gained the private apartments, and entered an antechamber, crowded with courtiers and suitors, who bowed respectfully as the distinguished personages passed through their midst. The lord chamberlain and his companion were then admitted to an inner room, where they found the king and Jane.

Seated in a velvet-covered fauteuil, in an easy attitude, with his foot on a tabouret, Edward was glancing at a letter which he held in his hand, and Jane was leaning over his shoulder. The attitude was well calculated to display the grace and beauty of her figure. She was attired in a tight-fitting *côte-hardie* of green velvet, with a girdle above the hips, and her sunny tresses were covered by a net of gold. Edward simply wore a tunic of embroidered satin, and had a black velvet cap on his head.

At a little distance from the king was Malbouche, the jester, who was playing with a small monkey, fastened to a stand.

On entering, the two nobles made a profound obeisance to the king, and did not neglect to salute the royal favorite.

"You are welcome, my Lord of Buckingham," said Edward. "I am right glad to see you back."

"Your majesty will be pleased to learn that I bring with me five hundred archers," replied the duke. "They are now encamped with the rest of the army on Blackheath, and await your majesty's orders."

“’Tis well,” replied Edward. “We shall now be able to muster fifteen thousand mounted archers, besides ten thousand foot soldiers. In a few days I shall march the whole army to Dover, where the embarkation will take place. I have just received a letter from my brother of Burgundy, wherein he promises to send me five hundred flat Dutch boats for transportation of the horses to Calais. Our own ships will convey the men-at-arms and ordnance.”

“I hope your majesty will be able to land all the men in safety,” said Hastings. “Louis has several men-of-war at Boulogne, and he may capture some of our transports.”

“Heaven forbid!” exclaimed Jane.

“I suppose you would dissuade his majesty from this expedition, madam?” remarked Buckingham.

“Your grace is mistaken,” she replied. “I would have him go on with it, unless his terms are agreed to. Having defied the King of France, he cannot honorably withdraw.”

“If I conquer France, I will make you a countess, sweetheart,” said Edward, “and give you a castle in Touraine, with a proud domain attached to it.”

“I would rather have this hunting-lodge than any castle in France,” she replied.

“Peradventure your majesty may not get beyond Calais,” remarked Malbouche. “I have no great faith in your two potent allies, the Duke of Burgundy and the Duke of Bretagne.”

“Neither have I,” said Jane. “I fear they may play you false.”

“You misjudge them, sweetheart. ’Tis their interest to be true to me. They are both opposed to Louis.”

“Since your majesty has determined to commence the embarkation forthwith,” said Buckingham, “’tis time that a portion of the army should march to Dover. I will take my

five hundred archers thither without delay, if your majesty desires it."

"You shall take thrice that number, my lord," said Edward, "and Hastings shall follow with as many more. Ere a week is out, the whole army shall assemble at Dover."

"Whom think you, my lords, his majesty is about to take with him to France, and at my suggestion?" observed Jane.

"A score of young knights, who will all wear your colors," rejoined Buckingham.

"A score of the wealthiest citizens in London," replied Jane.

"With what object?" demanded the duke, surprised.

"To show them honor, and make them witnesses of the enterprise," said Edward.

"These fat and well-fed citizens will never be able to endure the fatigues of war," observed Hastings.

"Then their voices will be for peace," said the jester; "and should his majesty require another loan—as most assuredly he will—they will help him to raise it."

Some further discussion ensued respecting the march of the army to Dover, after which the two nobles departed, and the king and Jane rode out into the Great Park attended only by the falconers and a couple of mounted grooms.

CHAPTER II

HOW KING EDWARD EMBARKED WITH HIS FORCES AT DOVER, AND HOW HE WAS RECEIVED AT CALAIS

Ere a week had flown, Edward reached Dover with his whole army.

On the morning after his arrival, he mounted to the ramparts of the ancient castle, to watch the embarkation of the troops. He was attended only by a young esquire and a page, both remarkable for good looks and symmetry of person.

From the lofty post he had chosen, the French coast was perfectly distinguishable, and even the tower of Notre Dame de Calais, with some of the buildings of the town, could be seen.

But the king's attention was chiefly attracted by what was going on in the harbor.

To a modern spectator, the crowd of vessels there collected would have presented a most singular and striking appearance. The larger ships were exceedingly lofty, and stood so high out of the water, that they might be compared to floating castles. They were richly gilded, and the royal cognizance was not only displayed at the sides, but painted on the sails.

These ships of fore-castle, as they were designated, had four masts—two in front and two near the stern. The masts were painted and gilt. Head and stern were alike. The fore-castle and cabin formed two towers, on the summit of which archers and arbalestriers could be stationed.

The king's own ship, the *Rose Blanche*, as she was called,

could be easily distinguished among her companions from her superior height and splendor. Her stately sides were emblazoned with the royal arms; the royal standard was hoisted at the prow; and the masts were hung with small flags of beaten gold.

Though these ancient vessels cannot be compared in point of utility with ironclads and modern "leviathans of the deep," it must be allowed that their appearance was infinitely more magnificent and imposing.

Beside the large ships, there were vast numbers of smaller vessels—picturesque looking galleys, with a high crook, surmounted by a carved figure, with the rudder at the side, and a short strong mast, having a sort of cage at the top, in which armed men could be placed; barges, balingers, pinnaces, and carvels.

Then there were certain long vessels, called *huissières*, having two rows of oars, with doors and bridges, for the transport of horses; and in addition to these, there were the five hundred flat-bottomed Dutch boats sent by the Duke of Burgundy.

No grander spectacle can be imagined than was now offered to the king, and the sea being almost as calm as a lake, the fleet could be seen to the greatest advantage. Even in the days of Edward III., and the Black Prince, no such armament had ever been provided for the invasion of France as was now collected.

But in other respects the picture was exceedingly lively and interesting. Not only were the inner and outer courts of the castle filled with men-at-arms and archers, but the cliffs were covered with troops, as were the quay and the beach.

Knights and esquires were constantly riding to and fro, bringing companies of foot-soldiers to the quay, to be conveyed thence in small boats to the pinnaces and carvels, and hundreds of horses were put on board the *huissières* and Dutch boats.

Having contemplated this exciting scene with the greatest interest for more than an hour, Edward quitted the ramparts, and attended by the young esquire and the page just alluded to, and whom he addressed as Isidore and Claude, mounted his horse, and rode down to the harbor, to superintend the proceedings in person.

But though the king's presence stimulated the men to greater exertions, the embarkation did not go on rapidly, and the whole fleet could not be got ready to sail before the following morning.

The flat-bottomed boats, containing the horses and artillery, and which were propelled by oars, had been previously sent off, but they moved very slowly, and had not made more than a couple of leagues.

After remaining on the beach for several hours, the king returned to the castle. The two pages, from the richness of their attire and grace of person, had excited considerable attention. Isidore, the chief of them, had evinced great interest in the embarkation.

Next morning, at an early hour, amid the roar of cannon from the castle, the clangor of trumpets, and the beating of drums, the king went on board the *Rose Blanche*, which looked like a gorgeous pavilion, the forecastle and cabin being hung with cloth of gold and arras, and the deck carpeted with velvet.

Amongst the distinguished persons already assembled on board the royal vessel, were the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, Thomas of Rotherham, Bishop of Lincoln and Lord High Chancellor; the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Northumberland, the Lords Dorset, Hastings, Stanley, and Howard, Sir Thomas Montgomery, Sir Thomas St. Leger, and other knights and esquires.

Somewhat removed from these important personages were Dr. Morton, the king's chaplain and confessor, and the king's physician and almoner.

Edward was very sumptuously attired, and was attended by the young esquires, Isidore and Claude. Malbouche the jester was likewise in attendance upon his royal master.

Shortly afterwards, the signal was given, and amid another roar of ordnance from the castle, that made the cliffs echo, the whole of the mighty armament was put in motion.

The sight was truly splendid. Already the galleys, balin-gers, pinnaces, and carvels, which were crowded with knights, esquires, archers, and men-at-arms, were in movement, and they were now followed by the larger vessels.

Close beside the *Rose Blanche* was another large and richly-ornamented ship called the *Azincourt*, on board which were the wealthy citizens invited by the king to accompany the expedition. All these personages were now on deck, and gazing with admiration at the spectacle.

Never from the heights of Dover had so grand a spectacle been witnessed as was then beheld.

The weather was most propitious, the day being brilliantly fine, with just sufficient wind blowing from the right quarter to waft the fleet across the channel.

After a time, as the sun became hot, a rich awning was drawn over the deck, and a splendid repast was served, to which the king and all the principal personages sat down.

Edward was waited upon by the two pages, and being somewhat self-indulgent, did not quit the table till the towers and walls of Calais came in sight.

Almost immediately after the *Rose Blanche* had cast anchor, Lord Wenlock, the Lieutenant-Governor of Calais, attended by several officers, came on board.

Finding the king surrounded by nobles, he bent the knee before him, and said :

“You are welcome, my liege. All is ready for your majesty, and those with you, in your loyal town of Calais.”

“I thank you, my lord,” replied Edward, graciously. “But what of my good brother of Burgundy? Has he

arrived at Calais, and what number of men-at-arms hath he brought with him?"

"I have not such good tidings to give of the Duke of Burgundy as I could desire, my liege," replied Lord Wenlock, rising. "His grace has raised the siege of Neuss, and has taken his army into Lorraine. But as yet he hath sent no men to Calais, nor hath he come hither himself."

"Ah! by St. George! this is strange!" exclaimed Edward, looking greatly surprised and displeased. "His highness promised to meet me at my landing with three thousand mounted men-at-arms, and a large body of foot, and you say none have arrived?"

"My liege, it is as I tell you," replied Lord Wenlock. "The Duke of Burgundy hath taken the whole of his army into Lorraine."

A murmur of displeasure arose from the nobles grouped around.

"Then he has broken his treaty with me," cried Edward, angrily. "He stipulated to find me ten thousand men. But what of the Constable St. Pol, and the Duke of Bretagne?"

"Would that I could give you good tidings of them, my liege!" replied Lord Wenlock. "As yet, they have done nothing."

"And they will do nothing," said the Duke of Gloucester. "Your majesty has been deceived by false promises."

"So it would seem," cried Edward. "But I can stand alone."

"Better alone than with such perfidious allies," said Gloucester.

"'Tis a grievous disappointment," remarked Clarence, "and will give confidence to Louis!"

"If your majesty will deign to listen to my advice, you will turn back without landing," said Malbouche.

"Peace, thou foolish varlet!" cried the young esquire,

who was standing behind the king. "His majesty would scorn thy counsel. Though King Louis were before Calais with all his army, our royal master would land and give him battle."

"Thou art right, Isidore," said Edward. "Our plans are in no way changed by these untoward circumstances. We shall prosecute the war with as much vigor as if the Duke of Burgundy had been here to join us. Return at once, my lord," he added to the governor, "and prepare for our entrance into the town."

Thereupon Lord Wenlock departed, and as soon as his boat touched the strand, a great stir was observable among the crowd assembled on the quay.

Loud shouts arose, and repeated discharges of cannon took place. The royal standard of England was hoisted above the Lantern Gate fronting the port, and another broad banner floated above the tower of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Calais.

Meanwhile a considerable number of archers, men-at-arms, and horses, had been very expeditiously landed from some of the transports, and these were now collected on the quay.

All being at last in readiness, a splendid bark came out for the king and his nobles; and as Edward stepped upon the landing place, which was covered with velvet, he was met by the Mayor of Calais, and the heads of the Municipal Council, in their robes, who bent the knee before him, and offered him the keys of the town on a velvet cushion.

This ceremony gone through, a procession was quickly formed, at the head of which marched the mayor and the Municipal Council.

These authorities were followed by the lieutenant-governor on horseback, wearing a richly-furred mantle.

Fortunately, the citizens of London had landed in time to join the procession, and they followed Lord Wenlock.

A body-guard of mounted archers preceded the king, who

rode a milk-white charger, and wore a crimson velvet surcoat, lined with ermine. On his right side walked Isidore, and on the left Claude.

Behind his majesty came the two royal dukes, with the whole of the nobles who had been in attendance upon him during the voyage, while another troop of archers brought up the rear of the procession.

In such state, amid the roar of cannon, the ringing of bells, the beating of drums, and loud flourishes of trumpets, intermingled with the shouts of the inhabitants, Edward entered Calais by the Lantern Gate, and proceeded to the cathedral, where he offered up thanks for his safe voyage, and invoked Heaven's aid for his arms.

On that night, the king and his suite were lodged at the Hôtel de Ville, which had been prepared for his majesty's reception.

CHAPTER III

HOW THE ENGLISH ARMY WAS ENCAMPED WITHOUT THE WALLS OF CALAIS; AND HOW ISIDORE, THE YOUNG ESQUIRE, WAS SENT ON A SECRET MISSION TO LOUIS

Next day the disembarkation commenced, and was conducted with the greatest possible dispatch. As may be imagined, the greatest confusion prevailed in the port; but at length, the whole of the men and horses were safely landed, and took up their quarters in the camp, which was formed outside the walls of the town.

Never before had so large an English army been seen in France as was now collected at Calais. There were fifteen hundred men-at-arms—most of them gentlemen—mounted

on strong, barded horses. Besides these, there were fifteen thousand archers, all well equipped and well mounted, and above four thousand foot soldiers—making a total of upwards of twenty thousand men. No wonder those who beheld this mighty host, commanded by a warlike monarch, who had gained almost every battle he had fought, predicted the conquest of France. But Edward himself was not altogether so sanguine, and felt greatly mortified that he had been deserted by the Duke of Burgundy, on whose aid he counted.

Seen from the old walls of Calais, the English camp presented a most striking sight. Laid out in long lines, the tents extended for more than a mile among the sandy dunes. The ground was not all that could be desired, but none better offered. The camp was divided into six quarters, four of which were allotted to the horsemen, as being the most numerous, and two to the footmen. Through the midst of the tents ran a broad street, and in the centre of the camp a large square was reserved for the assembling of the troops. Another place, surrounded by palisades, was appointed for the horses; and near the market-place was an entrenched spot, designed for the munition of the ordnance.

Besides the ordinary tents, there were others much larger and handsomer, in which the knights and officers were lodged. Bell-shaped and fashioned of rich stuff, these tents were surmounted by banners, emblazoned with the arms of their occupants.

But the most splendid feature of the camp, and which threw all else into the shade, was the royal pavilion, which was placed in a commanding situation near the town. This superb tent attracted universal attention. Its size was equal to its splendor. It consisted of five of the largest tents or pavilions, composed of cloth of gold, and connected by covered passages, so as to form a palace of immense extent, and comprehending every convenience. This will be understood when we state that each of the five grand pavilions had

a smaller tent attached to it on each side, and only separated by curtains from the other part of the structure.

The interior of this gorgeous silken palace was truly regal and magnificent, and constituted a series of splendid apartments, in which the two royal dukes, with the lord high chancellor and all the nobles and knights in immediate attendance upon the king, could be lodged. Here also were lodged the wealthy citizens of London, whom Edward had invited to accompany him on his warlike expedition to France. Here the luxurious monarch could be served with as much state and splendor as if he had been at Windsor Castle. Here he banqueted daily; a long table, decked with vessels of silver, being laid in the central pavilion, which was hung with cloth of gold.

Externally, this grand pavilion presented a splendid appearance, each angle of the roof being ornamented by gilt heraldic devices, representing the king's badges—the falcon within a fetterlock, the rose and sun, a white hart, a white wolf, a sable dragon, and a bull—each holding a small flag.

Thus splendidly housed, Edward could well afford to wait for a few days for the Duke of Burgundy, but as the duke came not, he waxed impatient, and determined to commence the campaign without him.

Before doing so, however, he judged it proper to send another herald to Louis, who was then at Compiègne with his army, and he was about to give orders to this effect, when the young esquire, Isidore, who chanced to be alone with his royal master at the time, said:

“Your majesty may smile, but the proposition I am about to make is perfectly serious. You will do well to send me to King Louis. I am firmly persuaded that I can obtain an advantageous treaty of peace for your majesty.”

“Thou negotiate a treaty!” exclaimed Edward, laughing incredulously.

“Yes, I,” replied Isidore. “I should proceed very dif-

ferently from any herald or ambassador your majesty might send, and I think I should succeed. Although you have brought this vast army to France, I am well aware that your majesty does not desire the war, but would rather come to a pacific arrangement, if it can be effected on satisfactory terms."

"Very true," remarked Edward.

"I am equally certain that Louis is of the same opinion," pursued Isidore. "He, too, desires peace; and I am very much mistaken if he will not make large sacrifices to obtain it."

"Nay, forsooth, he will not part with any portion of his kingdom, or even a small town—such as Boulogne—unless it be wrested from him," said Edward; "but he will do much to avoid a war, which he must perceive is inevitable unless he comes to terms."

"He cannot doubt that you are in earnest, sire, after all the preparations you have made," said Isidore. "He will therefore be ready to pay a large sum to get rid of you. What will your majesty accept?"

"A hundred thousand crowns down before I will conclude a peace with him," said Edward.

"Is that all?" asked Isidore.

"No; I shall require an annuity of fifty thousand crowns; and a marriage must be contracted between the Dauphin and my eldest daughter, the Princess Elizabeth. On such terms I may consent to take back my army to England."

"I am of opinion that I can obtain these terms for your majesty," replied Isidore.

"You are very confident," observed the king. "But, for many reasons, I cannot trust you with the mission. The matter is too important."

"If I fail, no harm will be done," said Isidore. "But I shall not fail."

"You are aware of the risk you will incur in the journey

to Compiègne? I can only send a very small guard with you."

"A small guard will suffice. I feel sure I shall arrive in safety."

"Since you are bent upon the expedition, I will not oppose you," said Edward. "You shall have my signet ring," he added, taking a large ring from his finger. "Show this to my brother Louis, and it will convince him that you come from me, and are empowered to treat with him."

"I understand," replied Isidore, as he took the ring. "Claude must accompany me."

"Be sure I shall not send you without your friend and companion," replied Edward, smiling. "But you ought to take Malbouche as well, for you are going on a fool's errand. However, all shall be ready for you and Claude to-morrow morning—horses and attendants. Moreover, a guide shall be found well acquainted with the country, and on whom you may place perfect reliance, and a safe-conduct shall be prepared for you and your attendants."

"I am greatly beholden to your majesty for allowing me to undertake this expedition," said Isidore, joyfully. "I scarcely expected you would consent."

"You are wilful and must have your way; but I shall never forgive myself if harm should befall you," said the king.

At an early hour next morning, a little party on horseback set forth from the camp, and took the road towards Ardres and St. Omer.

The party consisted of three well-mounted men-at-arms, at the head of whom rode the young esquire, attended by Claude. Both wore green velvet riding-dresses embroidered with gold, green velvet caps, and morocco boots; and each was armed with sword and dagger. They were provided with mettlesome jennets, which they managed like perfect cavaliers; and to judge from their manner, they evidently did not think any danger attended the adventure they had undertaken.

Cyriac Franklin, the principal man-at-arms, had been especially enjoined by the king to take charge of Isidore and his companion. He was strongly-built, and had a resolute look.

The party rode on through the flat and uninteresting country near Calais, then as now intersected by dykes, and had proceeded for about three leagues, when they descried a small party of horsemen advancing towards them at a rapid pace.

The leader of this little troop, whose appearance proclaimed his exalted rank, was a very powerful-looking personage, and rode a superb war-horse.

He was clad in a complete suit of polished mail, encrusted with gold, and the crest on his helm was formed by a golden lion. Over his shoulders was a crimson velvet mantle lined with ermine, and from his neck depended the order of the Toison d'or. His features, which could be easily distinguished, since his visor was raised, were strongly marked, and had an exceedingly proud, almost fierce, expression. His complexion was swarthy, and his eyes black and piercing.

As he came up, he glanced inquiringly at the young esquire, and seemed inclined to stop and question him, but suddenly changing his mind, he rode on.

Isidore, who had borne the knight's scrutiny as well as he could, now turned to Cyriac, and said, "Methinks that is the Duke of Burgundy."

"You are right!" replied the other. "'Tis Charles the Bold, in person."

The young esquire and the page exchanged glances.

"I am glad we had started before the duke reached the camp," remarked Isidore. "Had he seen the king he might have prevented our journey."

"'Tis fortunate he did not guess our errand, or he might have compelled us to turn back," said Claude.

Leaving them for the present, we will follow the Duke of Burgundy to the English camp.

Aware of the great dissatisfaction felt at his conduct by the English soldiers, the duke had need of all his hardihood to confront them; but though menacing looks were constantly thrown at him, he rode slowly through the camp, and stopped not till he came to the royal pavilion.

He then dismounted, and leaving his charger with one of his men, entered the pavilion and commanded the usher, who advanced to meet him, to conduct him at once to the king.

The usher bowed low, and led him ceremoniously through a sort of gallery filled with nobles and knights, who bowed reverently as the duke passed with haughty step, and then drawing aside a curtain of arras, which masked the entrance to a side tent, ushered the princely visitor into the presence of the king.

CHAPTER IV

HOW CHARLES THE BOLD ARRIVED AT THE ENGLISH CAMP; AND OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH KING EDWARD IN THE ROYAL PAVILION

Charles, Duke of Burgundy, one of the most renowned princes of his epoch, and well deserving of the surname he had acquired of *Le Téméraire*, was in the full vigor of manhood, being only just turned forty.

Temperate and abstemious, almost to a fault, the duke could not control the terrible fits of anger to which a fierce and violent temper rendered him liable, and he frequently indulged in acts of savage barbarity, apparently inconsistent with a generous and noble nature, such as he once possessed. But his disposition had become hardened and unrelenting by

the constant warfare in which he was engaged, and he seemed resolved to render himself feared rather than beloved.

Ever since he succeeded his father, Philip the Good, Charles the Bold had been continually at war with Louis XI., whom he detested because he felt himself inferior to that monarch in dignity and power, and he repeatedly declared that he would not rest till he had dethroned the French king. Despite this threat, he entered into several treaties with the crafty Louis, and even received a large bribe from him to discontinue the war, but the treaties were broken almost as soon as made.

Charles the Bold's restless ambition and warlike tendencies would not allow him to remain tranquil, and he was ever planning some new campaign. Firmly believing in his own great military capacity, he would never allow that he had been fairly defeated, and in the latter part of his career, after the disastrous battle of Granson, a deep dejection seized him. But at the time of his introduction to the reader, though he had sustained several reverses, his confidence in himself was entirely unshaken. He had given numberless proofs of the greatest intrepidity, and at the battle of Monthléry, when he was surrounded by the enemy, he performed prodigies of valor.

Eleven years prior to our story, the Duke of Burgundy espoused Margaret of York, sister to the King of England, at that time remarkable for her beauty. Subsequently to the marriage, Edward sent him the Order of the Garter.

Charles the Bold was warmly attached to his royal brother-in-law, and when Edward was driven from his dominions by Warwick, and compelled to take refuge in Holland, the duke furnished him with money and ships, and enabled him to regain his kingdom.

For this aid Edward naturally felt grateful, and promised to aid Charles in his ambitious designs against Louis. On his part, the duke was most urgent that his royal brother-in-law

should invade France, doubtless anticipating that he himself would reap the real harvest of the war.

Incited by the duke's representations of an easy conquest, Edward got together a large army, as we have related ; but in the meantime, Charles, from some unaccountable caprice, had laid siege to Neuss—a strongly-fortified town on the Rhine, not far from Cleves—and failing in his attempt to take it, turned his arms against the Duke of Lorraine, who had been induced by the wily Louis to declare war against him.

This was the ostensible reason why the Duke of Burgundy had not joined his royal brother-in-law at Calais, according to his promise.

Two finer looking men than Charles the Bold and Edward of England could not be seen. Yet there was not the slightest personal resemblance between them. Both were of lofty stature, but Edward was the taller of the two, and had the most graceful figure. Moreover, his features were far handsomer than the duke's.

Charles had a noble cast of countenance, and his deportment, though haughty, was exceedingly dignified ; but his stern look inspired uneasiness—even terror. His person was well-made, but robust, and indicated great strength.

Sheathed from head to foot in shining mail, he wore his harness as easily as a velvet jerkin. For a few moments he stood there, with his left hand upon the hilt of his lengthy sword, looking fixedly at Edward, as if uncertain how he should be received.

Edward did not embrace the duke, or even offer him his hand, but saluting him coldly, said, “Soh ! you are come at last, brother !”

“It is not my fault that I have not been here sooner,” replied the duke. “I have lost sixteen thousand men before Neuss, and was compelled to send the remains of my shattered army into Lorraine.”

Edward regarded him incredulously.

"From the steps you have taken, brother," he said, "it would seem that you are more anxious to make the conquest of Lorraine than to aid me in the conquest of France."

"Mistake me not, brother," rejoined Charles the Bold. "I have been compelled to change my plans. 'Twill be better now that we should not join our forces, but make war separately. Indeed, we have no choice, since the country has been so devastated by Louis, that both armies could not find sufficient food."

"But why did you allow Louis to lay waste the country?" demanded Edward.

"I could not prevent him," said Charles, angrily.

"No; because you were occupied on the Rhine, instead of being here according to your promise," cried Edward.

"Calm yourself, brother, and listen to me," said the duke. "This is what I propose. While you pass the Somme, and proceed by way of Laon and Soissons, I will drive the Duke of Lorraine from Luxembourg, and after possessing myself of Bar and Lorraine, will meet you at my good city of Rheims, where you can be crowned King of France."

"The plan pleases me not," rejoined Edward. "Since you seem to forget the terms of our treaty, I must remind you of them. It was agreed that I should pass over into France at the head of an army of ten thousand men, well armed and well equipped, while you were to assist me in person with all your forces to accomplish the invasion. As soon as war was declared we were to march together and attack the common enemy in all convenient places; and in the event of the conquest of France, it was agreed that I should bestow upon you the Duchy of Bar, the counties of Champagne, Nevers, Eu, Guise, the barony of Dousy, with all the towns on both banks of the Somme."

"I have not forgotten our agreement," remarked Charles.

"I have not done," pursued Edward. "On your part,

you expressly undertook to furnish for the war an army of twenty thousand men. Where are they?"

Charles made a movement of impatience.

"I must tell you plainly, brother, that your extraordinary conduct is viewed with the deepest dissatisfaction by my nobles, my knights, and my men. They do not understand why you should engage in another war at this particular juncture. If they were surprised that you should besiege Neuss, they are still more astonished that you should attack Lorraine."

"I owe your nobles and knights no explanation," remarked the duke, sternly.

"But you owe me one, brother," rejoined Edward. "I am not satisfied."

"You are angry with me without reason," said Charles. "All will yet go well. I have just received a letter from the Constable Saint Pol, in which he promises to deliver up Saint Quentin to you. Furthermore, he engages to serve me and all my allies—especially your majesty—against all enemies. I will place his letter in your hands. Are you now content with me?"

Without making any direct reply, Edward took the despatch, and said, "I will assemble my council at once, and you shall meet them."

"Hold me excused, brother," replied the duke. "I have come hither at the greatest inconvenience to myself, in order to explain matters to you personally, and I now desire to return to my camp in Lorraine without delay."

"By Saint George! you shall not go, brother, even if I forcibly detain you!" cried Edward, in a determined tone. "Your sudden arrival, and hasty departure, would have an injurious effect on the army. I will march forthwith to Peronne; and you shall accompany me thither!"

"Since you will have it so, I yield to your request," replied the duke, though with evident reluctance. "But

there must be no needless delay. Commence the march as soon as you can."

"The camp shall be struck to-morrow morn," said Edward. "I will give immediate orders to that effect."

He was about to summon an attendant, when Charles stopped him.

"There is a slight matter that I would fain mention to you, brother," said the duke, regarding him fixedly. "As I came hither, about three leagues hence, on the road to Guines, I encountered a handsome young esquire, with a page and two or three men-at-arms, who evidently came from your camp."

"How know you that?" said Edward, sharply.

"The men were clearly English, and so was their leader," replied Charles. "Whither were they bound?"

"You should have questioned them yourself, brother," replied Edward, carelessly.

"It struck me afterwards that the youth might be a messenger to Louis," remarked Charles, still keeping his eyes fixed on the king.

"If I sent a messenger to Louis, he would not be a youth, such as you describe," replied Edward. "I can give you no information respecting him."

Though by no means satisfied, Charles made no further remark.

A council of war was then summoned, at which the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, with all the principal nobles, were present.

Charles the Bold repeated all he had said to the king, and his explanation appeared satisfactory to every one save Gloucester.

The letter from the Constable Saint Pol, who, it may be proper to mention, was uncle to the Queen of England, was laid before the council, and the promises contained in it, apparently made in good faith, dispelled much of the distrust hitherto felt.

At the close of the meeting, the citizens of London were presented to the Duke of Burgundy by the king, and were received by Charles with the utmost courtesy.

After surveying the camp, so soon to be broken up, the king and the duke, who seemed now to have come to a perfectly good understanding, entered Calais, and proceeded to the church of Notre Dame, where they both alighted and made their prayers at the high altar.

A grand banquet in the royal pavilion concluded the day; and at this splendid entertainment were present not only all the important personages who had accompanied the king in the expedition, but the mayor and most worshipful citizens of Calais, as well as the much-honored citizens of London.

CHAPTER V

HOW KING EDWARD MARCHED HIS ARMY TO PERONNE; AND HOW THE CONSTABLE SAINT POL REFUSED HIM ADMITTANCE TO SAINT QUENTIN

By noon next day, all preparations being completed, the camp was struck, and the march of the army commenced into Artois. The first division was led by the king, who was accompanied by Charles the Bold, the Earl of Northumberland, and Lord Hastings, and attended by the spearmen of Calais, in black velvet gowns, and having massive chains round their necks.

Owing to the immense number of baggage wagons and other equipages, together with the long train of artillery, the progress of the army across the marshy land in the neighborhood of Calais was exceedingly slow, and the main body did not get beyond Ardres.

The first division, however, reached Saint Omer; but Edward, at the suggestion of the Duke of Burgundy, who represented to him that the inhabitants would be greatly inconvenienced, did not enter the town.

Towards evening, next day, the whole army arrived at Arras, and Edward, despite the duke's remonstrances, took possession of the Hôtel de Ville, and quartered the brigade under his own immediate command upon the townspeople.

Bapaume formed the limit of the next day's march; and on the fourth day Peronne was reached.

In the immediate vicinity of this strongly fortified town, situated on the north bank of the Somme, and possessing a castle garrisoned by Charles the Bold, Edward proposed to wait till Saint Quentin, which was only a few leagues distant, should be delivered up to him by the Constable Saint-Pol.

Throughout the march, the conduct of the Duke of Burgundy had been such as to inspire distrust. Evidently, he was most unwilling that the English army should enter any town belonging to him, or disturb the inhabitants. At Arras, where his wishes were disregarded, he could not conceal his vexation; and now at Peronne, though he could not refuse Edward admittance to the town, he would not lodge him at the castle.

The drawbridge was kept constantly raised, and no one was permitted to enter the fortress. Determined not to brook further delay, and fancying he perceived some symptoms of uneasiness about his brother-in-law, Edward called upon him to compel the constable to fulfil his promise to deliver up Saint Quentin.

Accordingly, Charles sent a letter to the constable; but as the messenger did not return forthwith, the king waxed impatient, and set out for Saint Quentin, with a guard of two hundred archers, accompanied by the Duke of Burgundy, who had likewise a small guard with him.

On arriving within a couple of leagues of Saint Quentin,

Edward commanded the captain of the guard to ride on with twenty men, and announce his approach to the constable.

On reaching the town with his company, the officer found the gates shut, and a number of armed men on the walls. Two large pieces of ordnance were placed on the summit of the gate, and the engineers threatened to fire upon him if he did not at once withdraw with his men.

Highly offended, the officer demanded admittance in the name of the King of England, whereupon a body of cavalry, commanded, it was thought, by the Constable Saint Pol in person, sallied forth, killed the officer, and three of the men, and drove off the rest, who galloped back as hard as they could, to warn the king of his danger.

Edward was riding slowly along, at the head of his men, with Charles the Bold by his side, and the Lords Hastings and Howard close behind him, when the discomfited soldiers came up, and told him what had happened.

Highly incensed, he cried out to the Duke of Burgundy, "By my soul, brother! you shall rue this treachery!"

"Am I answerable for the constable's misdoings?" observed Charles, coldly. "Visit your anger upon him."

"Think not to impose upon me by this equivocation!" cried Edward, furiously. "You are the real author of the mischief! Can I doubt that the constable is acting by your orders? But, as I live, both you and he shall repent it!"

"Calm yourself, I pray you, my liege," interposed Hastings, fearing that the quarrel might proceed to some dire extremity. "Doubtless, his grace will be able to offer an explanation."

"By Saint George of Burgundy! I know nothing of the matter," said Charles, "as I will prove to you. Let us ride on, and demand an explanation from the constable."

But Edward refused to proceed.

"You have deceived me," he said, sternly, "and I will not trust you further. You shall return with me to Peronne."

“As your prisoner? Never!” rejoined Charles, laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword. “Whoso dares hinder my departure had best look to himself! Come with me, Burgundians!”

Thus enjoined, his scanty band of followers pressed towards him.

Edward seemed disposed to stay him, but Hastings again interposed.

“He will never surrender himself, my liege,” said the earl; “and if he be slain, you will be held accountable for his death.”

Edward was sufficiently master of himself to listen to this judicious advice.

As the duke departed, he called out to him, “Take refuge in Saint Quentin, brother. The constable will gladly let you in, though he refuses me admittance.”

Disdaining to make any reply, Charles rode slowly away with his followers.

Firmly resolved to break off the alliance with his faithless brother-in-law, Edward returned to Peronne.

In the first impulse of his wrath, he determined to assault Saint Quentin, and wrest the town from the constable; but when he grew calmer, he deemed it advisable to await the result of the message to Louis.

Beginning to feel some uneasiness respecting Isidore, he resolved to send another messenger to Compiègne, and could find none more suitable than a cordelier, named Father Severin, who had accompanied the army from Dover.

Edward’s instructions to the cordelier, who could speak French fluently, were that he should proceed as quickly as he could to Compiègne, and ascertain if any mischance had befallen Isidore and Claude. Father Severin was charged to render them all the assistance in his power. Moreover, he was furnished with a letter, which he was to deliver to Louis, in case circumstances rendered the step necessary—not otherwise.

Provided with a stout, ambling nag, and with ample means for the journey, the cordelier set out alone, as it was not deemed prudent to send an escort with him.

Having taken this precautionary step, Edward employed himself in preparing for a vigorous prosecution of the war, should Louis decline to accept his conditions.

The bulk of the army were anxious that the campaign should commence in earnest, as they felt sure that the same success that had formerly attended the English arms awaited them now. Moreover, their patience was well-nigh exhausted and provisions were becoming scarce. They, therefore, ardently hoped that the king would soon order an attack upon Amiens.

The principal knights and nobles were, however, quite satisfied with what had already been done, and the citizens were of the same opinion.

Unaccustomed to hardships of any kind, the latter were annoyed by the trifling discomforts to which they had been subjected during the march from Calais to Peronne, and wished themselves safe back again in London.

CHAPTER VI

HOW ISIDORE PROCEEDED TOWARDS COMPIÈGNE, AND HOW HE WAS STOPPED BY A PARTY OF BURGUNDIAN SOLDIERS ON THE WAY TO MONTDIDIER

After the encounter with Charles the Bold, which had caused considerable alarm to Isidore and Claude, they proceeded across a plain, rendered famous at a subsequent period for the meeting between Henry VIII. and Francis I. ; and, without halting at Ardres, rode along the banks of a little river to Saint Omer, where they halted for the night.

Resuming their journey at an early hour next morning, and passing through Bethune, they reached Arras without hindrance or misadventure.

There they would have sojourned for the night, but as it seemed likely they might be detained by the authorities of the town, they decided upon proceeding as far as Douvens.

Next day they rode to Peronne, but did not enter the town, and after refreshing themselves and their horses, shaped their course towards Montdidier; but they had not proceeded much more than a league, when they perceived they were followed by a small party of Burgundian soldiers, with an officer at their head.

The leader of the troop called out to them to stop, and, as it was impossible to fly, they obeyed.

Facing about with his attendants, and assuming a courageous look, Isidore waited till the officer came up, and then haughtily inquired his business.

"Pardon me, fair sir," said the officer, courteously. "The orders I have received from the Governor of Peronne are to take you and your attendants back to the town. Be pleased, therefore, to come with me."

"I protest against any interruption in the name of the King of England!" said Isidore. "I am an envoy from his majesty to King Louis."

"I must remind you, fair sir, that you are still in the territories of his highness the Duke of Burgundy," said the officer, who had not in the slightest degree abated his courtesy.

"I am quite aware of it," replied Isidore. "But the duke, your master, is the ally as well as the brother-in-law of King Edward."

"Nevertheless, his highness does not choose that a message even from the King of England shall be sent without his grace's knowledge and approval to the King of France."

"How has the duke learnt that I am charged with any such message?" demanded Isidore.

“I am not bound to give any explanation,” replied the officer; “but it would seem that his highness encountered you and your party near Ardres, and suspecting your errand, has sent an order to have you stayed.”

“No doubt you have calculated the consequences of such a step. It will naturally give great umbrage to the king, my master.”

“I have simply to obey orders. You will be first taken to Peronne, and will then be sent back to the English camp. Compel me not, I pray you, to use force.”

“Since needs must, I will go with you,” said Isidore. “But I again warn you that the king, my master, will deeply resent this interference!”

“I cannot help it,” rejoined the officer, shrugging his shoulders.

With great reluctance, Cyriac and his comrades accompanied the Burgundian soldiers; but, as their young leader did not seem inclined to offer any resistance, they obeyed, and the whole party turned back, and proceeded towards Peronne.

They had not, however, got far when a troop of horsemen, whose accoutrement and the standard which they carried showed they were French soldiers, issued from a wood, and made quickly towards them.

At the sight of this troop, which more than trebled his own in number, the Burgundian officer, though a brave man, looked quite dismayed. In the leader of the hostile troop, he had recognized the Sire de Comines, one of the chief councillors of the French king, and he felt almost certain that this was only a reconnoitring party, and that a much larger force must be close at hand.

Bidding his men save themselves, he seized hold of Isidore's bridle, and tried to drag him along; but Cyriac came to the young esquire's assistance, and soon liberated him.

The Burgundian officer then struck spurs into his horse's flanks, and galloped off with his men towards Peronne.

Pursuit, however, was not attempted by the Sire de Comines, who presently came up with his troop.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN ISIDORE AND THE SIRE DE COMINES

The chief councillor and chamberlain of the French king was a noble-looking personage, and his strongly marked but handsome countenance was stamped by intelligence, and had a grave and rather stern expression.

Originally in the service of Charles the Bold, with whom he was a great favorite, Philip de Comines was induced to abandon the duke by the magnificent offers made him by the wily Louis XI., who desired to secure to himself a person of such ability.

On the defection of Comines, all his estates were immediately confiscated by the Duke of Burgundy, but he was amply rewarded for the loss.

Louis appointed him his chief councillor and chamberlain, with a pension of six thousand livres, and besides bestowing other lucrative honors upon him, created him Prince de Talmont.

Endowed with great shrewdness and power of observation, Philip de Comines kept a record of the most important events that occurred during the reign of Louis XI., and to him we are indebted for the best chronicle of the period under consideration.

But though the pursuits of the Sire de Comines were stud-

ous, he was well-skilled in military matters, and as fond of the sword as the pen. An excellent horseman, he constantly accompanied his royal master in the chase. He was above the middle height, and strongly built.

On the present occasion, he was clad in a suit of mail, damaskeened with gold, and graven with his arms, and over his armor he wore a rich mantle.

As he came up, he looked hard and inquiringly at Isidore, and said, "By your looks and habiliments you should be an English esquire. What do you here?"

"I am the bearer of a message from the King of England to King Louis of France," replied Isidore.

"By Saint Philip!" exclaimed De Comines, "your royal master does not show much respect to his majesty in sending to him such a coxcomb as thou art. Deliver thy message to me; I will convey it to the king."

"May I inquire who makes me the offer?" said Isidore.

"I am the Sire de Comines, Prince de Talmont, the king's chief councillor and chamberlain," said the other.

"And his majesty's best adviser," replied Isidore, taking off his cap, and bowing lowly. "I have often heard my royal master speak of you in terms of the highest commendation."

"Ah! indeed," exclaimed De Comines, looking hard at the speaker. "It appears you have much influence with King Edward."

"Not much," replied the esquire. "But he can trust me."

"And you have really an important message for King Louis? Do not trifle with me."

"My message is most important, as you will admit when I tell you that on the result of my interview depends war or peace!"

"Do you come as an ambassador from the King of England?" cried De Comines.

“No,” replied Isidore; “but I am authorized by the king to negociate a truce.”

Though scarcely crediting the assertion, De Comines made no remark; but, after reflecting for a few moments, said, “I will take you to the king. I had other matter in hand, but this shall supersede it.”

During the foregoing brief colloquy, the countenances of both speakers had been carefully watched by Claude and Cyriac, who soon saw an understanding had been arrived at.

They were not surprised, therefore, when the Sire de Comines ordered his men to return at once to Compiègne, while Isidore explained to his followers that he was about to accompany the French noble.

The whole party then set off at a brisk pace for Roye, where they halted, and then proceeded to Gournay.

After resting themselves and their horses at the latter place, they rode on to Compiègne.

During the whole of the journey, De Comines paid great attention to the young esquire, and seemed very anxious to obtain information respecting Charles the Bold.

All Isidore could tell him was that the duke had joined the king at Calais, but with only a very slender attendance.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW ISIDORE MET THE COUNT DE BEAUJEU IN THE FOREST OF COMPIÈGNE; AND HOW THE YOUNG ESQUIRE AND HIS COMPANION WERE LODGED IN THE ROYAL PALACE

Evening was coming on as the Sire de Comines and Isidore, with the others, entered the extensive forest adjoining Compiègne, and they were pursuing the road that led through it, when from a side alley, about a bowshot in advance, there issued a small hunting party, consisting of some half-dozen huntsmen, at the head of whom rode a man of middle age, habited in a green velvet hunting-dress. This person had a couteau de chasse in his belt, and a riding whip in his hand. Despite his plain attire, there was an air of distinction about him, and his manner, albeit peculiar and abrupt, was not devoid of dignity. He rode a very fine horse, and though his own attire was extremely plain, the liveries of the huntsmen were magnificent.

“’Tis the Count de Beaujeu. I did not expect to meet him here,” exclaimed De Comines.

With this, he signed to his men to slacken their pace, and rode on alone to join the count, who waited till he came up, the huntsmen slowly continuing their course, accompanied by the hounds.

The name and title of the stranger conveyed nothing to Isidore. He had never before heard of the Count de Beaujeu; but he was struck by his appearance. In age the count might be about fifty, perhaps rather more; but he looked full of vigor. His features were strongly marked, and characterized by great shrewdness, and had a very crafty and sarcastic expression.

While conversing with De Comines, the count ever and anon cast a scrutinizing glance at Isidore, proving that the young esquire was the subject of their discourse.

At length Isidore was summoned, and presented to the count, who thus addressed him, eyeing him keenly as he spoke.

“Soh ! you are an envoy from the King of England, I am told, young sir. You have some qualifications for the office, I admit. You are good-looking, and the Sire de Comines says you speak our language well ; but I cannot understand why your royal master should send you on the errand, unless a jest is intended.”

“I fear the laugh would be against me if I attempted to jest with King Louis,” rejoined Isidore.

“You are right,” remarked De Comines.

“Yet King Louis jested with his royal brother when he sent him that singular present of the wolf, the wild boar, and the ass,” observed the esquire.

“What said King Edward to the gift ?” demanded the count, laughing.

“I dare not tell you, my lord ; but his majesty was highly offended.”

“Perchance, it is in reprisal that he now sends you as his envoy ?”

“I am sent because his majesty felt certain I should succeed in the mission,” Isidore observed.

“He must place great reliance on your powers of persuasion,” remarked the count, drily.

“Persuasion will be unnecessary, my lord,” rejoined the esquire. “King Louis will gladly accede to the proposition I am empowered to make to him.”

“You think so ?” cried the count.

“I am sure of it,” rejoined the esquire, “because it is his interest to do so.”

Both the Count de Beaujeu and De Comines laughed heartily at this observation.

“You treat the matter lightly, my lords,” said the esquire; “but your royal master will view it very differently.”

“We shall see!” rejoined the count. “Have you a written authority from the king?”

“I have his signet ring,” replied Isidore, taking off his glove, and displaying it.

“Enough!” exclaimed the count, after he had carefully examined the ring. “I am satisfied. You shall have an audience of the king to-morrow.”

“I thank you, my lord,” said the esquire; “but, perchance, you promise more than you can perform.”

“I promise nothing, save that you shall see the king,” rejoined the count. “I have influence enough with him to procure you an audience; that is all. Take the youth to the palace,” he added, to De Comines.

So saying, he rejoined the huntsmen, and, again putting himself at their head, rode off at a brisk pace, and quickly disappeared.

“I have heard that the king has some strange favorites,” observed Isidore. “The Count de Beaujeu must be one of the strangest of them.”

“He has more influence than anyone else with the king,” rejoined De Comines. “His majesty can do nothing without him.”

Isidore would fain have questioned him further as to this singular personage; but finding him disinclined for converse, he forbore.

Nothing more passed between them till they emerged from the forest, and came in sight of the old town of Compiègne. Pleasantly situated on the banks of the Oise, it formed a very charming picture from this point of view.

Close to the town, but not within the walls, was the palace—a large fortified pile, surrounded by a deep moat, supplied with water by the Oise. The aspect of the structure, with its towers and ramparts, was exceedingly striking.

Dismissing the greater part of his men, with orders to proceed to the town, and retaining only a small guard, De Comines conducted the young esquire and his attendants to the palace.

The drawbridge was raised, but was instantly lowered on the appearance of the party; and crossing it, and passing through a gateway which was strongly guarded, they reached the court-yard.

Here several grooms and pages, in the royal livery, were collected; and by the time Isidore had dismounted, a gentleman usher made his appearance.

Addressing the usher, De Comines told him that lodgings were to be provided for the young esquire and his attendant, pointing as he spoke to Claude, who was now standing beside his master; upon which the usher bowed profoundly, said that orders to that effect had been given him, and all was ready for the young esquire's reception in the best part of the palace.

The significance with which the latter part of the speech was uttered did not escape Isidore, and he remarked with a smile to De Comines, "The Count de Beaujeu, I perceive, has been beforehand with us."

"In sooth, you are indebted to him for this attention," replied De Comines.

"I am none the less indebted to you, my lord," said Isidore. "Without your aid I should not be here now."

"Perhaps not; but all difficulties and dangers are surmounted, and you are safe in the royal palace. To-morrow you will see the king. No doubt I shall be present at the audience."

"And the Count de Beaujeu also?"

"Most likely. Till then, adieu! The usher will conduct you to your apartments."

Praying the young esquire to follow him, the usher then led him and Claude, who kept constantly near his master, to

a wing of the palace facing the Oise, and commanding a charming view.

It would seem that the rooms assigned the young esquire and his attendant must have belonged to one of the court ladies, for an elderly *gouvernante*, who was addressed as Madame Benoite, and her daughter Colombe, appeared to have entire charge of them, and waited upon the guests. No pages or valets were allowed to enter the rooms.

Strange as it seemed, this arrangement proved extremely agreeable to Isidore and his companion, nor could they complain, for the utmost attention was shown them by Madame Benoite and Colombe. Supper was served early, and, after partaking of it, Isidore retired to rest, being somewhat fatigued by the journey.

Next morning, there was a great stir within the palace, and Isidore inquired whether anything unusual had happened, and was informed by the *gouvernante* that the king was inspecting the garrison.

Feeling certain he should receive a summons when it was proper to present himself to his majesty, the young esquire did not leave his room, but passed the time in contemplating the beautiful view of the town and the river from the windows.

He was thus occupied when De Comines entered the room, and, after courteously saluting him, proposed to conduct him to the king.

"His majesty has graciously consented to grant you an audience," he said. "Have no misgiving; he is in a perfectly good humor, and I think all will turn out as well as you could desire."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Isidore. "But where is the Count de Beaujeu? I hoped to see him."

"You will see him anon," replied De Comines. "Let me show you the way to the king's cabinet."

They then went forth together, leaving Claude behind, though the page would fain have accompanied his master.

After traversing a corridor thronged by various officers connected with the royal establishment, who made way respectfully for them, and threading several narrow passages, they came to a second corridor, quite as crowded as the first.

Here they entered an ante-chamber, in which some half-dozen distinguished-looking personages were collected. These persons bowed to De Comines, and looked hard at Isidore, but made no remark.

Stationed at the further end of the room was an usher, bearing a white wand. On seeing them approach, he opened the door of the royal cabinet.

Greatly was Isidore surprised to find that there was no one in the little chamber except the person whom he had hitherto known as the Count de Beaujeu. The supposed count, however, no longer wore the hunting dress in which he had been first seen, but a costume that proclaimed his exalted rank. It was needless for De Comines to inform the esquire that this was King Louis.

Stepping forward, Isidore bent the knee to the monarch, who smiled graciously as he raised him.

CHAPTER IX

HOW ISIDORE HAD AN AUDIENCE OF KING LOUIS XI. IN HIS MAJESTY'S PRIVATE CABINET IN THE PALACE

Born in 1423, Louis XI. was now upwards of fifty, but still strong and remarkably active. He was of middle height, and stooped slightly, but his person was well formed. His features were sharp and intelligent, and his face being scrupulously shaven, its expression could easily be read. His eyes were gray, and their glances singularly keen and searching.

On his closely-cropped head he wore an embroidered velvet skull-cap, above which was a bonnet bordered with pearls, and having a little leaden figure of the Blessed Virgin placed in front. About his person were a number of saintly relics and images.

On the present occasion, his attire consisted of a tawny-satin tunic, embroidered with gold, over which he wore a purple velvet robe, furred with ermine. Dark-red silk hose, and velvet buskins of the same hue, completed his costume. Around his neck hung the chain of the order of Saint Michael, which he himself had founded in 1469.

The cruel, treacherous, and vindictive character of this able and most sagacious monarch is well known. Dissimulation was his practice; his favorite motto being, *Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare*. It is said of him by Mézerai, "that he never neglected to revenge himself, unless he feared the consequences would be dangerous." And he always acted up to this principle, for he sought to make himself feared.

"Louis XI.," says Monsieur Pitre-Chevalier, "is one of those political giants that arise at the moment of social revolutions; some carry the sword, others the pen—he carried the axe, and the executioner was his gossip. This inflexible organizer, who bequeathed to France in the midst of the remains of the old world the elements of a new world, a homogeneous kingdom, a public administration, manufactures, roads, ports, and that equality before the king, which one day became equality before the law—this man, who alone in his time comprehended and carried his thoughts in his head—this politician so fine, that he attempted to deceive Heaven, and braved Satan, of whom he was so much afraid—this Louis XI., in short, for his name alone ought to define him, said to himself, while thinking of his great vassals, whom he meant to destroy, 'My two cousins, Burgundy and Bretagne, shall fall the first.'"

Numerous assassinations were laid to the charge of this terrible king. It is said that he poisoned Agnes Sorel, the beautiful and amiable favorite of his father, Charles VII. ; and so fearful was the father of being poisoned by his son, that he refused all nourishment, and died from excess of precaution.

Those who became the confidants and favorites of Louis were men of the lowest condition. The three persons who had the greatest ascendancy over him were his provost-marshal, Tristan l'Hermite, whom he familiarly styled his gossip ; his barber, Olivier le Dain ; and his physician, Jacques Coic-tier. His best and sincerest adviser was Philip de Comines, whom he had contrived to detach from the service of Charles the Bold.

Louis never forgave a minister who abused his confidence ; and having discovered the treacheries of Cardinal Balue, he subjected him to a long and terrible imprisonment in an iron cage.

Ever since he ascended the throne, Louis had been engaged in a constant struggle with his great vassals, his rebellious subjects, and his powerful and ambitious neighbors.

Dangerous leagues were continually formed against him by his brother, the Duke de Guienne ; and when the duke died, it was said that Louis had removed him by poison. Other dark crimes were laid to his charge, and not unjustly.

The last and most dangerous league formed against Louis was that with which we have now to deal, and which comprehended the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke of Bretagne, and King Edward of England. But he hoped to break up this formidable alliance by his superior craft, and his first object was to get rid, at any cost, of the warlike monarch who had invaded his kingdom.

Fortunately for his purpose, the Duke of Burgundy had acted towards his royal ally with inconceivable folly, and Louis was not slow to take advantage of the Duke's egregious

blunder. If he could separate Edward and Charles, the Duke of Bretagne would be easily dealt with.

Regarding the young esquire with a smiling and encouraging look, the wily monarch said to him, "I promised you should see the king, and you perceive I have kept my word."

Isidore bowed, and Louis went on, in a cajoling tone, "I am very glad my good cousin, the King of England, has sent you to me. He could not have chosen a better messenger."

"I was not chosen, sire," rejoined Isidore. "I volunteered to come."

"*Pâques-Dieu!* you have plenty of courage!" exclaimed Louis. "Yet I am surprised the king could trust you."

"He knew I was in no danger, sire; and he knew, also, that he could rely upon me."

"Are you in full possession of his majesty's wishes, and able to treat for him?" asked Louis.

"I am, sire."

"In that case, I am persuaded we shall arrive at a satisfactory understanding. Believe me, when I assert that I have always desired to live on terms of amity with my good cousin, and, however appearances may be against me, my sincere wish has ever been that the two kingdoms should be at peace. Never since my accession to the throne have I undertaken a war against England; and if I received the Earl of Warwick, it was against the Duke of Burgundy, and not against King Edward."

"I will take care to mention this to my royal master," remarked Isidore.

"I know very well," pursued Louis, "that my good cousin has been induced to invade my kingdom by the artful representations of Charles of Burgundy. But the duke is unable to aid him. He has just returned from the siege of Neuss, wholly discomfited. His army is in such a deplorable condition, that he dares not show it to the king, your master."

"It would certainly appear so, sire," observed Isidore.

"I am also aware," said Louis, "that King Edward has an understanding with the Constable Saint Pol, whose niece he has married. But let him beware. The constable is a traitor, as I know to my cost."

"His majesty has little faith in him," observed Isidore.

"Mark me!" said Louis, significantly. "My good cousin will do far better to conclude a loyal peace with an old enemy, than to count upon the promises of his faithless allies."

"Such a peace may be concluded," said Isidore.

"You think so?" cried Louis, eagerly.

"I am able to state to your majesty the terms on which alone King Edward will consent to make peace."

"Let me hear them," cried Louis.

"Before King Edward will leave the kingdom, he requires seventy-five thousand crowns down."

"He shall have them," said Louis.

"Further, an annuity for life of fifty thousand crowns."

"Granted!" cried Louis. "Is there aught more?"

"Yes, sire; the most material part has to come," said Isidore. "The next condition is that a marriage shall be contracted between the dauphin and King Edward's eldest daughter, the Lady Elizabeth of York—it being understood that the princess shall receive an annual pension of sixty thousand crowns, secured on the revenues of Guienne, and to be paid at the Tower of London until such time as she shall come to France, to reside with her royal husband."

"This demand requires consideration," said Louis. "But I may possibly accede to it. How say you, De Comines?"

His councillor replied, in a low tone, calculated only for the king's ear:

"Bear in mind, sire, the advice of Sforza, Duke of Milan: 'Give what you have not got, and promise what you cannot give.'"

Seeing the drift of the remark, Louis added to the esquire, "I agree to the proposed marriage. Is there aught more?"

"There are some other demands," replied Isidore; "but they are of minor importance, and relate chiefly to the citizens of London. I doubt not the points will be readily conceded by your majesty."

"Ay, such matters do not need discussion," said Louis. "If I agree to the terms proposed to me, my motives must not be misunderstood. I desire peace, but am fully prepared for war. All the passages of the Somme are well guarded, and King Edward will not be able to pass the river without severe fighting—even if he should succeed in passing it. Is he prepared for a long campaign? I doubt it. The Duke of Burgundy has led him to suppose he can march on without difficulty. He will find it otherwise. The country has been wasted, and as he will not be able to procure provisions for his army, he may have to retreat ingloriously."

"King Edward will not retreat, if the war once commences," said Isidore. "Of that your majesty may rest assured. All difficulties will be surmounted, and he will return in triumph, like Edward the Third from Crecy and Poitiers, and Henry the Fifth from Azincourt."

"We are talking of peace, not war," cried Louis, sharply.

"True, sire," rejoined Isidore; "and peace can be made, provided my royal master's terms are agreed to by your majesty. A formal treaty has been drawn up, which only lacks your majesty's signature."

"Have you the treaty?" demanded Louis, hastily.

"Tis here, sire," rejoined Isidore, taking the paper from his breast.

Louis almost snatched the document from him, and ran his eye eagerly over its contents.

"Your majesty will find nothing more set down than what I have stated," said Isidore.

“ You have not misled me, I see,” cried Louis. “ When this treaty is executed—and I know you have sufficient interest with King Edward to bring that about—you shall have, in token of my regard, nine thousand crowns in gold, besides the thousand I will presently bestow upon you.”

“ Ten thousand crowns of gold !” exclaimed the esquire. “ ’Tis a royal gift !”

“ But you will richly deserve it, if you are the means of securing a peace between the two kingdoms,” observed De Comines.

“ The conditions are fully agreed upon,” said Louis ; “ but to keep up appearances, they must be formally discussed by ambassadors on King Edward’s part, and commissioners on mine ; after which, an interview can take place between my good cousin and myself, when the treaty can be executed, and a truce concluded.”

Isidore bowed assent, and Louis went on :

“ You must be content to be my guest for a few days,” he said, “ while certain preliminaries are arranged ; but you shall have as much privacy as you can desire.”

“ I am in no haste to depart,” replied the esquire ; “ but I trust I may be permitted to communicate with the king, my master, who may feel some uneasiness concerning me.”

“ ’Tis my wish that you should write to King Edward,” said Louis. “ One of the guard who attended you can take the letter to him. Very few words will suffice, as the missive might fall into wrong hands. Have you a man with you whom you can trust ?”

“ There is an archer named Cyriac, my liege, on whom I can perfectly rely.”

“ I have had some converse with the man,” remarked De Comines, “ and will answer for his fidelity.”

“ Enough,” said Louis. “ He shall have a safe-conduct, which will protect him, unless he should fall into the hands of the Duke of Burgundy. Do not for a moment imagine,” he

continued, with a singular smile, "that I mean to detain you as a hostage. But I may have a correspondence with King Edward, which you alone can conduct."

"I quite understand, sire," said Isidore.

"During your stay at Compiègne, which I will endeavor to make pleasant to you," said Louis, "you will do exactly as you please. Servants and horses shall be placed at your disposal. You can visit the town, ride in the forest, go where you will; all I require is that you do not leave without my consent."

Seeing that the interview was at an end, Isidore bowed profoundly to the king, and was reconducted to his apartments by De Comines.

CHAPTER X

HOW TWO SPLENDID LADIES' DRESSES WERE SENT BY KING LOUIS AS A PRESENT TO ISIDORE AND CLAUDE

Isidore's first business was to write the letter agreed upon to King Edward; and, having sealed it, he sent for Cyriac, to whom he entrusted it, enjoining him to deliver it into the king's own hands.

Cyriac, who had already received a safe-conduct, promised to execute his mission faithfully.

"No mischance, I trust, will happen to thee," said Isidore; "but shouldst thou fall into the Duke of Burgundy's hands, destroy the letter, and answer no questions touching thine errand."

"Fear not; I will say nothing, even if I be put to the torture," rejoined Cyriac.

"Shouldst thou reach the king in safety," pursued Isidore,

“tell his majesty that all has gone well, and that I have come to a satisfactory understanding with King Louis. Add that my return is uncertain, but his majesty need have no anxiety about me.”

Cyriac then departed, and shortly afterwards set out. He met with no interruption, at first, on his journey, but before reaching Peronne, he encountered the Sire de Sainville, with a party of soldiers, in the service of the Constable Saint Pol.

De Sainville showed no respect for his safe-conduct, but, thinking something might be made of him, took him to Saint Quentin.

Brought before the constable, Cyriac was sharply questioned, but refused to disclose his errand, though threatened with the halter.

Unluckily, however, the letter, which he had no opportunity of destroying, was found upon him; and this, though containing only a few words, satisfied the constable that a negotiation was going on between Edward and the King of France.

On making this important discovery, he clapped the unlucky messenger in prison, and set himself to consider how the affair could be best turned to his own advantage. After much deliberation, he resolved to warn the Duke of Burgundy; but as the duke was now with Edward, he could not, for the present, communicate with him.

Leaving this double-dealing personage to arrange his schemes, we will return to Compiègne, and see what had happened to Isidore.

If the young esquire had been a noble of the highest rank, greater attention could not have been paid him than he received from the wily monarch.

Everything that could be devised in so dull a court as that of Louis, was done for his amusement. Various sports and diversions were provided for him, and he was taken by the

king to hunt in the park and the forest; and Louis and the courtiers appeared delighted with his skill. On all occasions he was attended by Claude. Several entertainments were given by the king, at which he appeared as a distinguished guest.

One morning, Claude came into his chamber before he had risen, and laughing heartily, said :

“What think you the king has sent?”

“Nay, I cannot guess,” replied Isidore.

“Two splendid ladies’ dresses,” replied Claude; “one of cloth of velvet, evidently intended for you, and the other of figured satin, which, I suppose, must be meant for me.”

“Let me look at them!” cried Isidore, springing from the couch, and putting on a loose robe.

Exclamations of wonder and delight followed, when the dresses were brought in by Claude, and after they had been sufficiently admired, Isidore was easily prevailed upon to try the effect of the velvet costume.

Not satisfied with a mere trial of the gown, Claude insisted that the whole dress should be put on; and when the toilette was completed, Isidore stepped into the adjoining saloon, where there was a large mirror, to see the effect of the transformation.

The change, indeed, was magical. The handsome esquire had become a most beautiful woman.

Isidore was still standing in front of the glass, attended by Claude, who was arranging the dress with all the nicety and skill of a female hand, when sounds of laughter warned them that other persons were present; and turning, they perceived the king.

Louis had entered without being announced, accompanied by the Sire de Comines.

For a moment, he seemed lost in admiration of the lovely woman he beheld; while, on her part, Jane—for she it was—exhibited some little confusion at being thus discovered.

Claude, however, did not seem at all embarrassed, and, perhaps, might have been an agent in the plot.

"Pardon me, fair lady," said Louis, advancing. "I had all along suspected that the handsome young esquire sent to me by the King of England was no other than the lovely Mistress Shore, and I had, therefore, recourse to this stratum to elicit the truth."

Having now recovered her composure, Jane made a graceful reverence to the king, and said, "since the secret has been discovered, it would be idle to attempt to preserve my *incognita*; but I beseech your majesty to believe that no disrespect has been intended to you by King Edward. He consented very reluctantly to send me."

"*Pâques Dieu!* I am right glad he *did* send you!" cried Louis. "No other envoy could have pleased me better, or served him so well. By Saint Denis!" he continued, gazing at her with increased admiration, "I marvel not that my good cousin has been enslaved by so much beauty. Such charms are more than mortal could resist—especially a mortal so inflammable as King Edward."

"I have always understood that King Louis never condescended to flatter," remarked Jane.

"Truth sometimes sounds like flattery," rejoined Louis. "And in good sooth it would be impossible to flatter Mistress Shore. But come and sit by me, madame. I have something to say to you."

And he led her to a sofa, while the others retired to a short distance.

"Pray consider me as an old friend, madame," he said, in a wheedling tone, "and speak to me as freely as you would to King Edward. I should like you to carry away an agreeable impression of your visit to Compiègne."

"I cannot fail to do that, sire, having experienced so much kindness from your majesty."

"Poh! I have done nothing," said Louis; "nothing, at

least, in comparison with what I will do. Say the word, and I will make you a countess."

"I have really no desire for rank, sire, or my wish would have been already gratified."

"It shall be no barren title," said Louis. "You shall have a large revenue."

"I have more money than I need, sire," she rejoined.

"*Comment! diantre!*" exclaimed Louis, in surprise. "You are the first of your sex I have met with who has refused honors and wealth."

"Friendship is not to be bought, sire," she remarked.

"How, then, can yours be won?" he cried, regarding her fixedly. "Are you willing to exchange the Court of England for that of France?"

"No, sire," she replied, firmly. "I will never quit king Edward."

A strange smile played upon Louis's cynical features, as he observed:

"Your king is reputed to be inconstant."

"All men are inconstant, sire," she rejoined. "I do not expect a paragon. But King Edward is the best of men."

"No one can esteem all his noble qualities more highly than myself," said Louis. "But he has many advisers who are inimical to me, and I should like, therefore, to have a friend near him."

"I will gladly serve your majesty, if I can do so without prejudice to King Edward's interests."

"That is all I can ask," said Louis. "One point was touched upon in our previous discussion," he added, in a far more serious tone than he had hitherto assumed; "but I am sure I shall have all the aid you can render in the matter. There is an illustrious prisoner in the Tower of London, whose liberation I would fain accomplish. 'Twould be treason to aid her escape; but I am sure you feel pity for her."

"You allude to Margaret of Anjou, sire. My sympathies

Edward's Last Gifts to Jane

"Meantime, take these," he added, giving her a splendid chain set with diamonds, and some other ornaments lying on a small table near the bed. "Take them, I insist," he added, forcing the articles upon her.

Copyright, 1896, by B. Basso & Son.



L. E. A.

are with the house of York ; but I do pity the unfortunate queen from the bottom of my heart. Could I open her prison door, she should be free at once. These may be treasonable sentiments, but I have uttered them to King Edward, and he has not reproved me. You misjudge him, sire, if you suppose he is insensible to the sorrows of that bereaved wife and mother."

"Nevertheless, he will not set her free without a heavy ransom," said Louis. "That ransom I am prepared to pay. The unhappy queen's father, the good King René, is willing to make a sacrifice of part of Provence, to procure his daughter's liberation from captivity. I will advance the money, and if King Edward's demands are not too exorbitant, Queen Margaret will be set free."

"What sum are you willing to pay for the queen's liberation, sire?" asked Jane.

"Fifty thousand crowns," replied Louis. "The offer is from King René, not from me."

"If I have any influence with King Edward, no greater demand shall be made," said Jane.

"I place the matter in your hands," said Louis. "It may be that the poor widowed queen may owe her liberty to you."

"Ah! if I could only hope so!" exclaimed Jane.

"'Tis somewhat strange that no answer has been received from King Edward," observed Louis. "Our messenger, I trust, has not fallen into the hands of the Duke of Burgundy, or been detained by the Constable Saint Pol. My provost-marshal, Tristan, shall take a small troop of horse to Noyon to make inquiries about him. To-morrow, or next day, I shall go to Amiens, and I must pray you, fair lady, to bear me company, unless we hear from King Edward in the interim. Of course, you can resume your disguise, if you think proper."

"I thank your majesty," she replied. "It is not my

intention to abandon it until I have done with camps, and return to England. Had I not adopted that costume, I could not have accompanied King Edward."

"And if you had been left behind, I should have been the greatest loser, since I should not have had the pleasure of receiving the fairest of her sex at Compiègne."

As he spoke, he raised her hand to his lips, with an air of gallantry, and quitted the *salon* with De Comines.

No sooner were they gone, than Jane's attendant, who, it is scarcely necessary to explain, was no other than Alicia, habited as a page, began to laugh very heartily.

"I would not desire a more diverting sight than I have just witnessed," she cried. "I am certain you have captivated King Louis. A truce will be impossible if things go on thus. King Edward will have to continue the war to get you back again."

Jane tried to look grave, but failed. "Come and help me to change my dress," she said. "I have become so accustomed to the ease and freedom of male attire, that I cannot bear a gown."

CHAPTER XI

HOW LOUIS XI. HUNTED THE WILD BOAR IN THE FOREST OF COMPIÈGNE

Half an hour afterwards, Jane reappeared as the young esquire Isidore, and, followed by the supposed page, Claude, descended to the court-yard of the palace.

They were just in time to see the redoubted provost-marshal start on his expedition. A terrible personage was Tristan l'Hermite. Not a trace of feeling could be discerned in his

inflexible countenance. No smile ever parted his thin, tightly-compressed lips.

Armed in a coat of mail, over which he wore a surcoat with large loose sleeves, Tristan had a huge two-handed sword attached to his girdle. Ordinarily, he was attended by a couple of ill-favored varlets, provided with halters; nor were they absent on the present occasion, as their aid might be needed.

The provost-marshal had brought his horse close up to the king, who was stationed on a flight of steps. Having received his instructions, Tristan bent respectfully and departed, accompanied by a small detachment of archers, among whom were the two executioners before-mentioned.

As soon as he was gone, Louis called for horses and hounds, and noticing the young esquire amid the assemblage of courtiers, invited him to join the chase, telling him the day's sport would commence with a boar hunt. Isidore could not have refused; but, in sooth, he was very curious to see the royal pastime promised him.

Shortly afterwards, a large party of nobles and gentlemen, all well mounted and armed for the boar hunt, set forth from the palace, headed by the king.

In preparation for the boar hunt, Louis was accoutred in doublet and hose of coarse gray cloth, fitting close to the limbs.

A short two-edged sword hung from his girdle, and, like all his attendants, he was furnished with a sharp boar-spear. A boar-spear was likewise given to Isidore, but the king laughingly told him he would not have to use it.

In close attendance upon the king were three huntsmen, each of whom had in slip a couple of large and powerful hounds, having leather coats fastened round the body, to protect them from the boar's tusks—a very inadequate defence, as it turned out.

Thus attended, and taking care Isidore should not be far from him, Louis rode into the depths of the forest.

The spot where the boar was lodged was marked by strong nets, hung from tree to tree. These toils served to imprison the savage beast in his lair; and while they were being removed, Louis counselled the young esquire to take up a position near some distant bushes which he pointed out, so that he could witness the sport without much risk.

Soon afterwards, the boar was uncouched, and proved to be an animal of the largest size, and armed with tremendous tusks. Stalking forth very deliberately into the open space where the king and the nobles were grouped, he eyed the assemblage menacingly, and seemed singling out some one to attack.

A couple of hounds were now let slip, and, cheered by the huntsmen, they assailed the boar fiercely, striving to seize him by the head. But both were speedily shaken off. Despite his leathern coat, one was ripped up by the boar's merciless tusks, and the other disabled.

Having thus liberated himself from his assailants, the chafed animal turned upon the huntsmen nearest him, foined at them with his tusks, broke their spears, and put them to flight.

Delighted with the proofs thus afforded of the formidable brute's prodigious strength, Louis ordered the four remaining hounds to be unleashed, and cheered them on himself to the attack.

The conflict seemed unequal, but the boar comported himself well, and gained the applause of all the hunt, especially of the king, who was enraptured by his prowess.

At first, the advantage seemed with the hounds, but, ere long, two were laid sprawling on the ground, and the others were so much hurt that they could not hold the boar, who dashed off towards the bushes near which Isidore and his companion were posted.

Claude instantly galloped off, for it was clear that the infuriated beast meant to attack them; but Isidore displayed no alarm. Dexterously avoiding the boar's onslaught, he

struck the fierce brute with his spear, but could not pierce his tough and bristly hide ; and this manœuvre was successfully repeated, until the king had time to come up with his attendants.

Seeing the young esquire's peril, Louis drew his sword, and, by a downward stroke, hamstrung the boar, causing the animal to sink on his haunches. Next moment, Isidore's spear, plunged under the shoulder, pierced the boar's heart.

"By Saint Hubert! a great feat!" cried Louis. "You have slain the fiercest and largest boar in the forest."

"But for your majesty's aid, the boar would have slain me," rejoined Isidore.

"And then I should have borne the blame of the mischance," said the king, "though I cautioned you to keep out of the way of danger. However, you have displayed great courage. The boar's head shall be yours, and you can send it to King Edward if you choose."

"His majesty would be astounded if he received such a present from me, sire," replied Isidore.

"*Pâques-Dieu!* we must not alarm him!" cried Louis; "nor shall you run any further risk. We will pursue a safer sport, in which you excel."

After this, no fewer than seven noble stags were slain, his majesty being always foremost in the chase. Nor was Isidore far behind. The young esquire rode so well, that he attracted general attention, and received warm commendation from Louis himself. The last stag roused led them to the furthest extremity of the forest, where he was slaughtered by the king's own hand; and the party were riding slowly back, when they suddenly came upon an extraordinary scene.

CHAPTER XII

HOW ISIDORE SAVED A CORDELIER FROM THE CORD

In the centre of an open space, at the north side of the forest, grew an immense oak, with wide-spreading arms.

Underneath this mighty tree were stationed Tristan l'Hermitte and his archers ; and at the very moment when the royal hunting party approached the solitary spot, the provost-marshal was superintending the execution of certain prisoners he had taken.

Already three unhappy wretches, just strung up, were dangling overhead from the branches of the oak.

A fourth prisoner was kneeling upon the ground, with his hands clasped in prayer, awaiting a like fate. He was a cordelier, and his hood was thrown back, so as to display his features, which now wore the livid hue of death.

Near him stood the two caitiffs, watching for a sign from their leader to tie him to the fatal tree.

On beholding this scene, Louis pressed forward, not with any intention of staying the execution, but because he felt curious to know what offence the wretched culprits had committed.

Tristan, however, thought it best to get the job done, and talk afterwards. Accordingly, he gave the word to his assistants, and in another moment all would have been over with the unfortunate cordelier, if Isidore had not come to his rescue.

The young esquire, who was close behind the king, had recognized the features of the kneeling monk. The face was too well known ever to be forgotten. The recognition was mutual. But it was not a vindictive look that the cordelier

fixed upon the esquire, nor was it supplicatory. It was rather a last farewell.

But, be it what it might, it touched Isidore to the quick; and he exclaimed to the king, "Sire, you have promised me a boon. I now ask one from your majesty. Grant me the life of that man."

Tristan heard the request, and glanced significantly at his royal master, to intimate that the prisoner ought not to be spared.

"What has he done?" demanded Louis.

"Sire, he is a spy employed by the Duke of Burgundy," replied Tristan.

"Impossible!" cried Isidore. "I know him. He is an Englishman."

"He was taken with those men, who are Burgundians," said Tristan, doggedly, determined not to relinquish his prey.

"I believe him to be a messenger from the King of England," said Isidore, earnestly.

"It is true," said the cordelier, "I so represented myself, but my assertion was not credited."

"I had no proof of what the man stated, sire," remarked Tristan, gruffly.

"Because my safe-conduct and letter of credence had been taken from me by the Burgundians," cried the cordelier.

"If this monk be executed, King Edward will most assuredly require a strict account of his death," said Isidore. "An untoward occurrence at this juncture might be fraught with serious consequences."

"Since you take a personal interest in the prisoner, it is sufficient," said Louis. "Release him," he added, to Tristan.

Thereupon, the cordelier was instantly set free, and prostrating himself before the king, thanked him for his gracious interposition in his behalf.

“Rise, father,” cried Louis. “You have had a narrow escape. You should address your thanks to this young esquire, not to me. ’Tis to him you owe your life.”

The cordelier bent his head, but spoke no word.

“Draw nearer,” said Louis. “If thou hast any message to me from the King of England, deliver it.”

“I have no message, sire,” replied the monk. “His majesty had become anxious for the safety of his envoy, and sent me to ascertain that all was well with him. I met with misadventures on the way, as you are aware, being captured by those Burgundian soldiers, and re-captured by your provost-marshal, who refused to listen to my explanation. All would have been over with me had not your majesty appeared so opportunely, and saved me; and I again thank you for my life, though it is scarcely worth preserving. My errand is fulfilled. I can now report to my royal master that I have seen his envoy, and that he is well.”

“Thou shalt have something more to report,” said Louis. “But do I understand thee aright? Hath not Cyriac, the archer, arrived? He was despatched hence some days ago, with a missive to King Edward.”

“No messenger had arrived, sire, when I departed; and King Edward, as I have said, had become uneasy. Cyriac, I doubt not, has been captured, for I learnt from the Burgundian soldiers that an English archer was in the hands of the Constable Saint Pol.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Louis, angrily. “By Saint Denis! the constable shall regret his interference. But you must get back quickly, and allay your royal master’s fears respecting his envoy. Where is King Edward now?”

“Encamped near Peronne, sire,” replied the monk.

“*Pâques-Dieu!* So near?” exclaimed Louis. “Then ’tis time we were at Amiens. Since my provost-marshal hath brought thee here, he shall escort thee back. Thou hearest, Tristan,” he added, to that important officer. “Find a

horse instantly for this good friar, and conduct him as nigh as thou canst to Peronne."

"I will bring him within a league of the town," said the provost-marshal. "He must do the rest himself."

"Give him whatever gold thou hast about thee," pursued Louis.

Tristan slightly murmured at this injunction, and the cordelier hastened to say that he desired no reward.

"Stay a moment," cried Louis, as if an idea had suddenly crossed him.

Then, turning to Isidore, he said, "I am very unwilling to part with you, but if you desire to return with this friar I will not hinder you."

"I thank your majesty," replied the young esquire; "but as I may have more to do, I will avail myself of your gracious invitation, and prolong my stay for a few days. Tell the king," he added, to the cordelier, "that I am not a prisoner, but a highly-honored guest of the King of France. Say that I have accomplished all I undertook. Say, further, that I could have returned with thee had I been so minded, but for many reasons, which his majesty will understand, I deemed it best to remain here."

"I will repeat all that has been told me," rejoined the monk.

"Acquaint King Edward that to-morrow we proceed to Amiens," said Louis. "If his majesty desires to treat with me, and three days hence will send commissioners to the village of Corbie, near that town, I will send other commissioners to confer with them. You understand?"

"Perfectly, sire," replied the monk. "I will not fail to deliver your message."

While this was passing, Isidore gazed earnestly at the cordelier, but the latter sedulously avoided meeting his glance. Nor did he look at the young esquire as he withdrew.

Louis then rode on with his attendants to the palace, while

Tristan, in obedience to his majesty's behests, escorted the friar on the road towards Peronne.

Late in the evening the cordelier arrived at the English camp, and was immediately taken to the royal pavilion. Edward was overjoyed to learn that Isidore was in safety, and was well satisfied with the message sent him by the French king.

Next day, as appointed, Louis set out for Amiens, taking Isidore with him. He was accompanied by a large retinue of nobles and knights, and guarded by five hundred men-at-arms. The inhabitants of the town received him with every demonstration of delight. The church bells were rung, and cannon discharged from the walls.

The king first proceeded to the cathedral, where mass was celebrated, and the vast building being crowded on the occasion, presented a magnificent sight.

Louis fixed his quarters in the Chateau de Saint Remi, where his large retinue could be accommodated. Apartments in the chateau were, of course, assigned to Isidore and his attendant, Claude; and if the young esquire had been a prince, greater consideration could not have been shown him.

As the time approached when the terms of the peace he so ardently desired were to be settled, Louis redoubled his attentions to the English king's favorite, being still apprehensive of some miscarriage.

But all seemed to be going on smoothly, and a message was received from Edward stating that he agreed to the proposed meeting at Corbie, and would send his commissioners thither on the appointed day.

The commissioners appointed by the English king were the Lord Howard, subsequently created Duke of Norfolk; Sir Thomas Saint Leger, one of the king's body-guard; Dr. Morton, Bishop of Ely, who subsequently became lord chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury; and Dr. Dudley, Dean of the Royal Chapel.

The commissioners chosen by Louis were Jean de Bourbon, Admiral of France, the Seigneur de Saint Pierre, and the Bishop of Evreux.

All difficulties seemed to have been removed, but still the suspicious King of France continued uneasy. He feared, and not without reason as it turned out, that the Duke of Burgundy would make a determined effort to break off the treaty. To guard against this eventuality, which might have destroyed all his plans, he induced Isidore to write a letter to the King of England calculated to produce the desired effect.

CHAPTER XIII

BY WHOSE CONTRIVANCE ISIDORE OVERHEARD WHAT PASSED BETWEEN LOUIS AND THE ENVOYS OF THE DUKE OF BURGUNDY AND THE CONSTABLE OF SAINT POL

At this critical juncture, the Duke of Burgundy was at Valenciennes, and he, having received some intelligence that secret negotiations were going on between the two kings, he immediately despatched his chief councillor, the Sire de Coutai, to Louis, to make such terms with the king as he might deem advisable. At the same time, the Constable Saint Pol sent the Sire de Sainville on an errand of a like nature.

Both ambassadors arrived at Amiens about the same time, but were not allowed to meet. Anxious that Edward should know what dependence could be placed upon his allies, Louis devised a plan by which Isidore might overhear what passed at the audience.

In the reception-chamber was a large screen, behind which the Sire de Comines and the young esquire were concealed, while Louis sat down upon a fauteuil in front.

As soon as all was arranged, the Sire de Coutai was introduced, and immediately announced the duke's willingness to enter into a separate treaty with the king, if terms could be agreed upon.

"What terms does the duke require?" demanded Louis.

"Eu and St. Valéry, sire," replied De Coutai.

"I will rather burn them to the ground than give them to him," replied Louis. "Tell the duke, your master, that I am about to conclude a peace with the King of England, and if I gave those towns to anyone, it would be to him, whom I have found loyal and honorable."

"I knew not that the treaty was so far advanced, sire," remarked De Coutai. "Methinks the duke, my master, ought to have been informed of it."

"Wherefore?" demanded Louis, sternly. "The Duke of Burgundy has deceived his royal brother-in-law, and the King of England will no longer trust him. The English nobles and knights are boiling with rage at the tricks played them. Every treaty I have made with the duke has been shamefully violated, and, by Saint Denis! I will not make another treaty with him, unless he chooses to cede to me a part of his possessions."

"That he will never do, sire!" said De Coutai.

And with a profound reverence to the king, he retired.

At a summons from Louis, De Comines and Isidore came from their place of concealment.

"Now what think you of the Duke of Burgundy?" said Louis to the young esquire.

"Unless I had overheard what has passed, I could not have believed in his duplicity and ill faith, sire," replied Isidore. "King Edward will never trust him more."

"King Edward is unlucky in his allies," remarked Louis, drily. "You will find that the duke is more than matched by the Constable Saint Pol. But you must back again to your hiding-place, for here comes the constable's envoy."

As De Comines and Isidore slipped behind the screen, the Sire de Sainville was introduced by the usher, and was very graciously received by the king.

“My lord the constable desires me to offer your majesty the assurances of his entire devotion,” said De Sainville. “He will act in any way you may command him. From the first, he has energetically remonstrated with the Duke of Burgundy against his alliance with England, and has endeavored to induce him to break it off. At last his representations have been successful.”

“And for this good service I am indebted to the constable?” remarked Louis.

“Entirely so, sire,” remarked De Sainville. “I know not what he said to the duke; but I never saw his grace in such a furious passion. Very little would have induced him to fall upon the English, and plunder them. He was especially enraged against his brother-in-law, the King of England, and spoke of him in no measured terms.”

“Aha! what did he say? How looked he when he spoke?” demanded Louis.

“He looked half-frenzied, sire,” replied De Sainville. “His gestures were as violent as his words. He stamped furiously on the ground thus,” suiting the action to the word, “and smote the table with his gauntleted hand. This was the manner of his speech,” continued de Sainville, trying to give an imitation of the tremendous voice: “‘By Saint George, this King of England has no royal blood in his veins. He is the son of Blackbourn, the handsome archer, who took the fancy of the Duchess of York. Fiends take him for a vile ingrate! When he fled from the Earl of Warwick, who made him a king and then dethroned him, he came to me without a *denier*, and I gave him money, ships, and men, and enabled him to regain his kingdom, and now he abandons me! But, by my father’s head! he shall regret it.’”

“Ha! ha!” laughed Louis. “Said he aught more?”

“Much, sire,” replied De Sainville. And again mimicking the duke’s voice, he said, “‘This luxurious king has come here as if to a festival. He has brought with him a pack of fat citizens, who think only of feasting and carousing. In addition to these boon companions, he has brought with him his favorite, the fair Mistress Shore.’”

“Hold there!” cried Louis. “I will hear naught against Mistress Shore. She is accounted the handsomest woman in London. Nor can we match her in Paris. *Pâques-Dieu!* King Edward did well to bring her. Had I been in his place, I would not have left her behind. Truly, the duke must be mad to talk thus! But hath his choler abated?”

“Not a whit, sire. He is still as infuriated as ever against King Edward.”

“And King Edward is justly indignant against him, so there is little chance of their reconciliation,” remarked Louis. “I thank my good brother, the constable, for the assurances he has given me of his attachment, but I cannot entertain any proposition from him for the present. I will send a messenger to him when I have aught to communicate.”

With this, he dismissed De Sainville, who felt he had gained nothing, and that the wily king had been merely trifling with him.

As soon as the envoy was gone, De Comines and Isidore again came forth.

“There is not much to choose between the duke and the constable, you perceive,” observed Louis, laughing.

“I know not which is worst,” said Isidore. “Better have an enemy like your majesty, than such treacherous allies as these.”

“That is precisely what I said,” rejoined Louis.

“I am impatient to recount what I have just heard to King Edward,” cried the esquire. “Shall I set out to the English camp at once?”

“No—defer your departure till the preliminaries of peace

are settled," remarked Louis. "Should you be taken by the Duke of Burgundy or the constable, a heavy ransom would be demanded for you. But even if there were no danger, I own I should be sorry to part with you."

"If I prolong my stay the king may grow impatient——"

"Write and reassure him. With such a hostage in my hands, I feel perfectly certain King Edward will perform his promises to me. He would be the first to laugh at me if I parted with you. So you must e'en tarry with me a little longer. I will do my best to amuse you."

Seeing it was useless to remonstrate, Isidore assented with a good grace, and withdrew.

De Comines was about to retire at the same time, but the king detained him.

"I have something for you to do," he said. "I want a large sum of money—a very large sum. Cost what it may, we must get these English out of the country. We must refuse them nothing to get rid of them—nothing, except an acre of land, or a town. However short might be their stay, as in the time of the king, my father, the damage done would be enormous. Money must not be spared. The chancellor must set out instantly for Paris, to raise the largest sum he can. Everybody must lend me money—everybody must aid me at this juncture. With money I can carry out my plans, and get rid of these accursed English, who have been brought here by that perfidious Charles the Bold, to serve his own purposes."

"Your majesty need have no fear," said De Comines. "You will easily obtain all the money you require."

"Ay, but I must have it at once," cried the king. "If my coffers are replenished, they will soon be emptied again. Besides the sum to be paid to King Edward, I shall have to make large gifts to his brothers, the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester—to all his privy-councillors—to his grand chamberlain—the Lord Hastings, who stands highest in his favor.

—to the chancellor—to the Lord Howard—to Sir John Cheyne, the Master of the Horse—Sir Thomas Montgomery, and Sir Thomas Saint-Leger.”

“Your majesty must not omit the most important of all—the fair Mistress Shore,” said De Comines.

“Hitherto, she has refused all I have offered her,” said Louis; “but I have won her by fair speeches. It may be she will accept some gift at parting. We shall see. King Edward could not have served me better than to send his mistress here. I marvel not he is so much enamored of her. Of a truth, she is very charming.”

De Comines smiled.

“Your majesty must not take her from him,” he said, “or most assuredly the truce will be broken.”

“I have no such thought,” cried Louis. “I am all anxiety to get rid of Edward and his army. We must keep them all in good humor till they go. Rich presents shall be distributed among the king’s retinue. I must entertain them all—entertain them royally. Those fat citizens, of whom I hear, must be feasted; and the common soldiers must have wine enough to drown them. All the taverns in Amiens shall be thrown open to them.”

“A grand scheme, and I doubt not it will answer your majesty’s expectations,” remarked De Comines.

“But to carry it out, I must have money,” cried Louis—“a vast sum, as I have stated.”

“I see the necessity, sire,” said De Comines. “The money shall be procured.”

“Then about it at once!” cried Louis. “Let the chancellor and the chief financiers set out for Paris without delay, and bring back with them two hundred thousand crowns.”

CHAPTER XIV

HOW THE SIRE DE MERANCOURT BECAME ENAMORED OF JANE; AND OF THE STRATAGEM BY WHICH HE OBTAINED ADMITTANCE TO HER CHAMBER

By this time it had become generally known that the handsome young envoy from the King of England was no other than the beautiful Mistress Shore in disguise, and several young nobles of the court sought to win her regard, but she would listen to none of them.

The Sire de Merancourt, a daring and profligate young noble, famed for his successes, had made sure of an easy conquest, and was especially mortified by the repulse he received, but he determined not to give up the pursuit.

“She shall be mine,” he said to the Seigneurs de Bressuire and Briquebec, with whom he was conversing. “It would be an eternal disgrace to us if she were allowed to return to her royal lover. If he loses her, as he will, he will only have himself to blame. It would be a poor compliment to our French gallantry to suppose that we should not make ourselves agreeable to her. She affects to be cold, as if it were possible a fair creature, who has excited so strong a passion in King Edward’s breast as to make him neglect his queen, could be cold !”

“No, no !” cried Briquebec ; “and I hold it impossible she can be faithful to such an inconstant lover as King Edward. She is afraid there are too many spies about the court, and that any little affair in which she might be engaged would come to the ears of her royal lover.”

“Our king keeps a jealous watch over her, that is certain,”

remarked De Bressuire. "One would almost think he was in love with her himself."

"Despite all difficulties, she shall be mine!" cried Merancourt. "I have never yet found the woman who could resist me, nor shall fair Mistress Shore. To-night I am resolved to see her alone; but I must have recourse to stratagem to obtain admittance to her chamber. To-morrow, you shall hear how I have been received."

They then separated.

On that evening, Jane was alone in her room with Alicia. She had resumed her female attire, but her attendant was still in the garb of a page.

Just as they were about to retire to rest, a tap was heard at the outer door; and when it was incautiously opened by Alice, a richly-attired young noble stepped in, and passing through the ante-chamber, shut the door, and fastened it inside, before Alice could follow him.

All this was the work of a moment. Then, rushing up to Jane, he fell on his knees before her, and, seizing her hand, pressed it passionately to his lips.

"At length I behold you in the dress of your own sex!" he cried, with well-feigned rapture; "and I must be permitted to express my admiration of your beauty! Perfectly as your disguise suits you, your own costume is infinitely more becoming!"

"Cease this strain, my lord," she cried, endeavoring, but vainly, to snatch away her hand. "I will not listen to it. Why have you come hither at this hour? Had I not supposed you brought a message from the king, you would not have been admitted! I must pray you at once to retire."

"Pardon me if I venture to disobey you, fair lady," he cried, quitting his kneeling position, but still retaining her hand. "If I am guilty of any apparent disrespect towards you, you must attribute it to the passion that overmasters me. I love you to distraction, and would run any risk for you. You cannot be insensible to love like mine!"

“Your words produce no other effect on me save displeasure, my lord,” replied Jane, coldly; “and I must again beg you to retire, unless you would seriously offend me.”

“Hear what I have to say!” cried Merancourt; “and if you still reject my suit, I will obey you. You cannot hope long to retain King Edward’s love. Even now, perchance, it is on the wane, since he is noted for his inconstancy. But my love for you will be lasting. To me you will not be a toy, to be thought of for moments of dalliance, but an object of deep affection.”

“I will hear no more,” cried Jane, interrupting him angrily. “Leave me instantly, I command you.”

“What if I refuse to go?” rejoined Merancourt.

“Then I will summon assistance!” she cried.

“I have taken all needful precautions to prevent interruption. My servants are without in the gallery.”

“Alice!” she exclaimed, in alarm.

“Your attendant is shut up in the ante-chamber,” he rejoined. “No one can come to you. You are completely in my power.”

“Not so!” cried Jane. “I can rouse the palace with my shrieks!”

“Be silent, madame, on your life!” he exclaimed, in a menacing voice, and grasping her arm so tightly that she could not stir from the spot.

At this juncture, when all seemed lost, unlooked-for assistance arrived.

A loud authoritative voice was heard in the ante-chamber, which instantly caught the quick ear of Merancourt.

“Confusion! ’Tis the king!” he exclaimed.

“The king! Then I am saved!” cried Jane.

And bursting from him she flew to the door of the ante-chamber, and drew back the bolt.

Next moment, Louis entered the inner room, followed by Tristan l’Hermite.

“*Tête-Dieu!*” ejaculated the king. “Are we interrupting an amatory *tête-à-tête?*” But as no immediate reply was given, he said, sharply, “What brings you here, Sire de Merancourt?”

“Since your majesty demands an answer, I have only to say that I came here by this fair lady’s invitation,” replied De Merancourt.

“’Tis false, sire!” cried Jane; “and, till now, I did not believe a French noble would seek to shield himself by a base subterfuge. The Sire de Merancourt came here for a dishonorable purpose, and I have to thank your majesty for my preservation.”

“I cannot for a moment doubt what you tell me, madame,” rejoined Louis. “Nor does the Sire de Merancourt, who has thus sullied his proud name, attempt to contradict you. You are under arrest, my lord,” he added to the young noble. “To-morrow we will decide upon your punishment.”

As Tristan advanced to fulfil the king’s command, Merancourt stepped towards Jane, and said:

“Before I go hence, I ask forgiveness from this fair lady. My sole excuse,” he added, in a penitential tone, “is that her charms have driven me distraught.”

“And I am willing to attribute your conduct to disordered reason, my lord,” said Jane. “’Twould please me best, sire, if this matter were forgotten,” she added to the king.

“Since such is your desire, madame, I will not oppose it,” said Louis, “though I feel I am dealing far too leniently with the offender. The Sire de Merancourt may thank you for his escape. What I came here to say to you must be reserved till to-morrow. May your sleep be sound after this disturbance, and no ill dreams annoy you!”

So saying, he departed, with Tristan.

Merancourt fixed an imploring look at Jane, who averted her gaze from him, and, bowing deeply, followed the king from the room.

CHAPTER XV

OF THE TERRIBLE REPROACHES ADDRESSED BY CHARLES THE BOLD TO KING EDWARD

Meanwhile, the negotiation continued without interruption.

A conference took place at Corbie, as appointed, between the French and English commissioners, and the terms of the treaty having been definitely settled by them, it was agreed that the two monarchs should hold an interview at Picquigny, when they could mutually swear to the performance of the conditions.

Intelligence of this important arrangement having reached the Duke of Burgundy, who was then at Luxembourg, he set off at once with a retinue of only sixteen men, and on the evening of the same day arrived at the English camp.

Dismounting at the entrance of the royal pavilion, he burst abruptly into the king's presence.

Edward, who was conferring with the Lord Howard at the time, instantly arose on the duke's entrance, but forbore to embrace him. For a few minutes they stood gazing at each other.

The duke was the first to break silence.

"I would speak to you alone," he said.

At a sign from his royal master, Lord Howard instantly retired.

As soon as they were alone, the duke advanced somewhat nearer to the king, and, regarding him fiercely, said :

"Is it true you have made peace with Louis without consulting me?"

"Nothing can be more certain," replied Edward. "The

negotiation was concluded two days ago, at Corbie, between the Admiral of France, the Lord of Saint Pierre, and the Bishop of Evreux, on the part of Louis, and the Lord Howard and three chief commissioners, on my part. I was about to send you word that the treaty was signed."

As Edward spoke thus calmly, the duke made an effort to repress his wrath; but it now burst forth with perfect fury, and he stamped and foamed with wrath.

"Ha! by Saint George! by our Lady! by our Lord and Master!" he cried, dashing in pieces a small table that stood near him. "You have signed your own dishonor! You consent, at the bidding of the wily Louis, to recross the sea without fighting a single battle—without even splintering a lance! Have you forgotten what was done by your valiant ancestor, King Edward the Third?—how, with much smaller force than yours, he invaded France, and gained the glorious battles of Crecy and Poitiers? Have you forgotten the great deeds of Henry the Fifth, whose race you have extinguished, and whose son you have murdered? With half the number of men you have brought with you, King Henry fought and conquered at Azincourt! Nor would he return till he was master of France. And you," he continued, in accents of the deepest scorn—"you, who boast of having won nine battles, now propose to depart, having done nothing, and won nothing! You allow yourself to be cajoled, and accept a worthless peace!"

After a momentary pause, he went on:

"Mistake me not. 'Tis the maintenance of your honor that brings me here. To me this ignominious truce matters nothing. Not for my own interest did I counsel you to invade France. I do not need your aid. Charles of Burgundy can defend himself against his foes, as his foes will find. Farewell, brother!"

And he turned to depart, but Edward called out to him:

"Stay, brother. I have listened to you patiently—too

patiently, perchance—and, by heaven ! you shall now listen to me.”

“Say on, then,” cried the duke, sternly. “But think not to move me.”

Edward then went on, the calm dignity of his deportment forming a marked contrast to the duke’s violence.

“Better than anyone else, brother,” he said, “you are acquainted with the motives of my voyage to this country, and if you choose to forget them, I must refresh your memory. Amiens and other towns had been taken from you by Louis, and despite all your efforts, you could not regain them.”

“By our Lady ! I *shall* regain them, and without your aid,” cried the duke.

“But your design in bringing me here,” pursued Edward, “was that I should hold Louis in check, and keep him from Flanders and Artois, while you made war on your own account on parts of Germany and Lorraine. To lure me over, you made abundance of fair promises, and declared I should win mountains of gold. You would wait for me you said, in the Boulonnais, with a large army. Where are your knights, your men-at-arms, and your foot soldiers?—melted like snow in the sun. When you came to me in Calais, you had not even a page to attend you.”

“I might have had a fair dame, disguised as an esquire, to accompany me, had I so chosen,” observed the duke, scornfully.

“An idle taunt,” said Edward. “I came to France solely to aid you ; but since, owing to your folly, you are unable to carry out your projects, I have nothing more to do here. Had I desired to fight for the honor of England, I should have acted very differently. Not requiring your help, I should have made the invasion at the time and place that best suited me ; and ere I had been in France a week, several towns taken or burnt, and a multitude of enemies destroyed, would have shown that it was England’s quarrel, and not Burgundy’s, in which I was engaged.”

“You talked otherwise, brother, when you sought my aid to regain your kingdom,” observed Charles, in a tone of haughty reproach. “Had I refused you, Henry VI., or his son, whom you have slain, would now be on the throne of England. For the last time I ask, are you resolved to make this disgraceful peace?”

“Firmly resolved; nor do I hold the peace to be disgraceful,” rejoined Edward. “I shall sign the treaty, and, by Heaven’s grace, I will keep it.”

“Be it so,” cried the duke, furiously; “Louis has completely outwitted you. This stain upon your arms will dim the splendor of all your former exploits.”

Thereupon, he quitted the pavilion, and, mounting his charger, rode off with his slender retinue.

Though highly incensed, Edward did not seek to stay him.

CHAPTER XVI

SHOWING IN WHAT MANNER THE WHOLE ENGLISH ARMY WAS ENTERTAINED BY KING LOUIS AT AMIENS

So delighted was Louis with the result of the negotiation, and so fearful lest some misunderstanding should arise before the treaty was concluded, that he spared nothing to keep the English in good humor.

Presents were bestowed with a lavish hand. Annual pensions were promised to Edward’s privy-councillors, to the Lord Hastings two thousand crowns, to the lord chancellor a like sum, and one thousand crowns each to the Marquis of Dorset, the Lord Howard, and Sir John Cheyne. Numberless other presents were made, both jewels and money, by the

open-handed French monarch ; and as he had now raised a large loan in Paris, he cared not what sums he spent.

As a boon to the English soldiers, by whom we may be sure it was highly appreciated, he sent a hundred charettes, laden with good wine, to the English camp, which, since the truce had been agreed upon, had been pitched on the banks of the Somme, within a league of Amiens.

Twenty wagons followed, laden with provisions, so that the whole army could make good cheer. This extraordinary liberality on the part of Louis produced the effect anticipated, and put all the men in good humor.

But the French king's hospitality did not end here. He caused it to be announced in the English camp that all knights and esquires, and all the chief men-at-arms, would be welcome at Amiens ; that all the taverns in the town would be thrown open to them, and that they would everywhere be entertained free of cost. Special invitations were given to nobles and distinguished personages, and to the citizens of London.

At first, this invitation was laughed at as a jest, but those who rode from the camp to Amiens found it was seriously made. Four long tables had been placed at the north gate, furnished with all kinds of relishing viands, hams, tongues, dried fish, and a profusion of the best wines of Bordeaux.

The king's chamberlains, the Seigneurs De Craon, Briquibec, Bressuire, and Villiers, presided over the tables, and when an English knight appeared, a groom went up to him, and bowing respectfully, led his horse to one of the chamberlains, who courteously besought him to alight, saying, "Come, and break a lance with us, fair sir !" A place was then found him at the table, and assiduous serving-men ministered to his wants.

As will be readily conjectured, the tables became so crowded that not a place could be found, and those who

came late were sent on to the taverns, where they were hospitably entertained.

A goodly sight it was to see the English knights received thus courteously by their sometime enemies, who now challenged them only with goblets of wine, and the French king's courtiers were infinitely amused by the scene.

But none of the English were so gratified by their reception as the citizens of London. For more than a week these self-indulgent personages had been restricted to poor fare, and had drunk but little wine. Dainties of all kinds were now set before them, with abundance of fine wines, and they feasted as joyously as if they had been at some great city banquet, and drank the health of their royal host in flowing cups. Louis had given orders that they should want nothing, and his injunctions were obeyed.

But as the festival went on, the courtesy of the chamberlains and the civility of the attendants were severely tried by their guests, who began to wax noisy and insolent, and quarrels were with difficulty averted.

If the knights were troublesome, it was still worse with the men-at-arms and archers, who now began to flock into the town in crowds, invaded the taverns and private houses, and drank to excess. Had the French been disposed to fall upon them when they were thus stupefied, they could easily have massacred them all. But Louis had no such design. The Sire de Torci, grand master of the crossbowmen, complained to him of the disorderly conduct of the English soldiers, but the king commanded him not to interfere, dreading lest a quarrel should begin.

Next day, however, the influx of English soldiers into the town became so great that the guard grew alarmed, and the Sire de Comines deemed it necessary to warn the king, who was preparing to attend mass in the cathedral.

"Sire," said the councillor, "I am unwilling to interfere with your devotions; but the matter on which I have to

speak to you is urgent. Something must be done, or mischief will infallibly ensue. More than nine thousand English soldiers are now in Amiens."

"*Diantre !* Nine thousand !" exclaimed the king, amazed.

"Yes, sire ; and they are all armed. Others are continually arriving, and none are stopped at the gate, for fear of giving them offence. I fear your majesty's consideration for your former foes has been carried a little too far."

"*Pâques-Dieu !* this must be stopped," cried Louis. "Mount at once. Ride to the English camp as quickly as you can, and see Lord Hastings, or Lord Howard, or some other English noble of sufficient authority to stop the invasion. If need be, see the king himself. Away with you. I will meet you on your return at the north gate."

As the Sire de Comines departed on his errand, Louis—who was not very seriously alarmed, for he thought the numbers had been greatly exaggerated by his councillor—proceeded to the cathedral.

As he entered the sacred edifice, justly accounted one of the noblest structures in France, he found the whole interior thronged with English soldiers.

Though somewhat alarmed at first, he was quickly reassured by the quiet deportment of the men, who were looking upwards at the lofty roof, surveying the enormous pillars lining the aisles, peering into the numerous beautiful chapels, or gazing with wonder at the three magnificent rose windows adorning the transept.

Thus occupied, they did not even notice the king's entrance by a side door. When the solemn service was commenced, they all knelt down, and at its close departed without making any disturbance.

Wishing to ascertain as far as he could by personal observation what was going on outside the town, Louis determined to mount the cathedral tower, and though Tristan endeavored to dissuade him, he persisted, and accomplished the ascent.

Two other persons were on the summit of the tower when he reached it with Tristan, and these proved to be Isidore and Claude.

"I did not expect to find you here," said Louis, as soon as he recovered sufficient breath to speak.

"I came here to look at the English camp, sire, since I am not allowed to go there," rejoined Isidore.

"Can you see it?" cried Louis.

"Distinctly, sire," was the reply. "I can point out the king's pavilion to your majesty."

"Show it me," said Louis, advancing to the battlement.

About half a league off, in a broad plain, contiguous to the River Somme, and surrounded by fine trees, lay the English camp, presenting a vast array of tents, in front of which stood Edward's large cloth of gold pavilion, plainly distinguishable, as well for its superior size and splendor as from the royal standard floating above it. Close beside the pavilion a clump of spears was collected, and the sunbeams glittered brightly on their polished helms and armor.

Riding slowly along the central alley of the camp, attended by a score of knights, was a majestic personage, mounted on a richly-trapped charger. Isidore felt sure this must be the king, and Louis himself entertained the same opinion. The whole camp seemed astir, and various martial sounds, such as the beating of drums and the fanfares of trumpets, were distinctly audible, even at that distance.

But the attention of Louis was chiefly attracted by the number of men-at-arms marching from the camp to Amiens. Now and then, a knight, or a few mounted archers, rode in the same direction; but, generally speaking, the throng consisted of foot-soldiers.

From the lofty position he had taken up, a very good idea could be formed by Louis of the actual state of the town, and it was such as to cause him considerable uneasiness. Of course, the ramparts and gates were guarded by his own sol-

diers, as was the Château de Saint Remi, where a large body of troops were assembled, but all the public places seemed filled with English archers and men-at-arms, who far outnumbered the French.

“*Grand Dieu!*” exclaimed Louis, filled with consternation at the sight. “How are we to get rid of them?”

“Only let them drink enough, sire,” rejoined Tristan, significantly, “and I warrant they shall not trouble your majesty long.”

“May the fiend take thee for the villainous suggestion!” said Louis, sharply. “No harm must be done them. They are my guests, and shall depart in safety.”

“But they are quarrelsome, sire, and our soldiers will brook no insults,” said Tristan.

“If a quarrel arises, our own soldiers will be in fault, because they will disobey my express injunctions,” said Louis. “Therefore, punish *them*—not the English.”

“I would these accursed Englishmen had never been allowed to enter the town!” grumbled Tristan. “I fear they will never return to their own quarters!”

“If your majesty will allow me to go to the English camp, I am sure I can prevail upon King Edward to recall them,” said Isidore.

“No, no; I do not desire to trouble the king,” cried Louis. “Return to the castle, and do not stir forth again unless I send for you.”

Without another word, he descended from the tower, followed by Tristan, and immediately quitting the cathedral, repaired to the north gate.

There he found several of his captains, and ordered each of them to assemble a hundred men secretly in his quarters, so as to be ready in case of emergency. Moreover, he directed that the guard at the castle should be doubled—giving strict instructions that the slightest disposition to tumult should be

everywhere repressed, but that the greatest forbearance should be shown towards the English.

These orders given, he proceeded to the long tables outside the gate, which were still crowded as before. All the guests arose on his appearance, and made the place resound with their shouts.

After pledging them in a cup of wine, Louis begged them to be seated, and turned his attention to the citizens of London, who had again found their way to the place of entertainment. They were charmed with the king's gracious manner, as were all whom he addressed, and matters were proceeding most satisfactorily, when the Sire de Comines returned from the English camp, bringing with him Lord Hastings, the Earl of Northumberland, and Lord Howard.

On seeing these nobles, Louis felt quite easy. He received them without ceremony, and invited them to a repast, which he had caused to be set out in the guard-chamber of the gate.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW THE SIRE DE MERANCOURT AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO CARRY OUT HIS DESIGN, AND BY WHOM HE WAS SLAIN

Meanwhile, Isidore and Claude, in obedience to the king's commands, had quitted the tower of the cathedral, and returned to their apartments in the Château de Saint Remi, where they remained till evening.

Isidore had heard of the arrival of the English nobles, and fully expected they would bring him some message from King Edward; but none came, and he did not attempt to conceal his disappointment.

“Methinks the king has forgotten me,” he said. “He is

content that I should remain as a hostage for him, and cares not to send me a word when an opportunity offers, though he knows how welcome a message would be. As to Lord Hastings and the others, their negligence is inexcusable. They ought to have waited upon me as soon as they had seen King Louis."

"But consider what they have to do!" said Claude. "It will be no easy matter, even for Lord Hastings, to get back these unruly soldiers, now they have broken loose. Be sure no disrespect is intended you. Your term of probation will soon be over. Two days hence, the truce will be signed, and then you will be at liberty once more."

"That will be delightful!" cried Isidore. "Oh, how glad I shall be to return to England! I am quite tired of France."

Thus they continued to converse, till it began to grow dark, and Isidore had given up hopes of seeing Lord Hastings, or any other English noble, when an attendant entered the room, having with him a page, who said that he was come to conduct the young esquire to the king.

"I will attend him at once," replied Isidore, joyfully. "Where is his majesty?"

"At the north gate of the town," replied the page. "There are several English nobles with him."

"You hear!" cried Isidore, to Claude. "They have not forgotten us."

"So it seems," replied Claude. "Shall I accompany you?"

Isidore assented, but the page said his orders were only to bring the young esquire; so Claude was, perforce, left behind.

Wholly unsuspecting of any ill design, Isidore quitted the château by a postern, and entered a public place, which was now filled with English soldiers, evidently fresh from the taverns.

To avoid these men, the page turned into a narrow thoroughfare, which appeared totally free from obstruction, though it did not seem to Isidore to lead in the direction of the north gate.

It was now growing dark ; and as there were no lights in the houses, the streets they were tracking had a gloomy and deserted look, and offered a strong contrast to the noisy and crowded public place they had just quitted.

As they went on, Isidore noticed two persons about fifty yards in front, one of whom turned round ever and anon, as if to watch them.

Trifling as was this circumstance, it caused him some alarm ; but his uneasiness was increased when he perceived they were followed by another individual, who appeared to regulate his pace by theirs, and kept at a certain distance behind them.

At the same time, Isidore began to suspect that the page was taking him in a wrong direction, and he questioned him on the point.

“Are you sure this street leads to the north gate?” he asked.

“Quite sure,” replied the other. “I have brought you this way to avoid those drunken English soldiers.”

Somewhat reassured by the answer, Isidore went on, until a gateway could be distinguished, communicating, no doubt, with some large mansion ; and near this gateway the two persons, who had thus far preceded them, suddenly halted.

Isidore's misgivings now returned, and with redoubled force ; and he would have retreated, if he had not perceived that the third individual was still behind.

He, therefore, endeavored to pass on ; but one of the persons who had inspired him so much with terror stopped him, and said, in accents that were instantly recognized as those of the Sire de Merancourt :

“Will not the fair Mistress Shore deign to enter my house ?”

"I know not what you mean," replied the supposed esquire; "but I cannot be hindered. My attendant will tell you that I am on the way to the king."

"The king must wait for you, fair lady," said Merancourt. "The stratagem has succeeded perfectly, and has placed you in my hands. Enter, I beg of you."

"You will repent your audacious design, my lord," rejoined Jane. "I will rather die than enter your house. Release me, I command you!"

"Do not compel me to use force, madame," said Merancourt. "You cannot escape me now. The gate is open, and will be closed as soon as you have passed through it. I will then defy King Edward—ay, even with our own king to aid him—to take you from me!"

"You will forever stain your name, my lord, if you commit this infamous act!" cried Jane, struggling to free herself from him. "Help, help!"

"You call in vain," he rejoined. "No help will come."

"You are mistaken, villain!" cried a voice that thrilled through Jane's breast, and instantly dispelled her fears. "Defend yourself!"

Next moment, a knightly personage—it was the same individual who had followed her at a distance, and inspired her with distrust, like the others—came up, and attacked Merancourt, sword in hand.

Thus assailed, the libertine noble was compelled to relinquish his hold of Jane, who, however, did not take to flight, but awaited the issue of the conflict.

It was of brief duration.

Merancourt soon found he had a formidable antagonist to deal with. His sword was stricken from his grasp; while, at the same time, a tremendous downward blow from his adversary's weapon cut through his steel cap, and stretched him lifeless on the ground. Merancourt's attendant took no part in the combat, nor did he exhibit a disposition to molest Jane.

Things remained in this state for a few moments, when the household, alarmed by the page, rushed forth with torches, and revealed a terrible scene.

Beside the body of the traitorous noble he had slain, stood the tall and majestic figure of a knight, clad in magnificent armor. He was leaning upon his sword, and the supposed esquire was clinging to his arm.

Not far off was Merancourt's pusillanimous attendant, who called upon the household to avenge their slaughtered lord, and they were preparing to make an attack upon the knight, when the sound of horses' footsteps was heard rapidly approaching, and, the next moment, a large party rode up to the spot.

At the head of the party was the French king in person, and with him were the Sire de Comines, Tristan, the Lord Hastings, and the other English nobles, who had come over from the camp. Louis was followed by some half-dozen grooms, and a small escort of mounted archers.

"*Pâques-Dieu!*" he exclaimed, gazing at the scene. "De Merancourt slain!"

"Yes, sire; he deserved his fate," rejoined Jane. "I have been rescued, as you perceive, by this English knight."

"By Our Lady, he has done well!" exclaimed Louis; "although he has robbed my gossip, Tristan, of a fee. But how is your deliverer called?" he added, gazing at the tall knight, who had now lowered his vizor.

Before replying, Jane consulted the knight, and then said:

"With your majesty's permission, he desires to preserve his incognito."

"As he will," rejoined Louis; "though I should have been glad to have a little talk with him. Perchance he does not know our language."

"He speaks it perfectly, sire," replied Jane.

"Then let him ask me a boon, and, by Saint Louis, my ancestor, I will grant it!" replied the king.

“I take you at your word, sire,” said the tall knight, stepping forward, and making a stately bow. “’Tis plain, from what has just happened, that the charge of this fair lady must be a great trouble to your majesty. Lest any further mischief should happen, I will ask you to allow me to conduct her in safety to King Edward.”

“But I hold her as a hostage,” cried Louis.

“Have no fear, sire,” said the knight; “King Edward will perform his promise.”

“You answer for him?” cried Louis.

“As for myself, sire,” replied the knight.

“Then take her to him. By my faith, I shall not be sorry to be rid of the responsibility. Tell my good cousin, King Edward, that I have done my best to look after her, but, as he wots well, a precious jewel is more easily guarded than a fair woman. I would have hanged this daring traitor had he stolen the prize, but still the king might not have been altogether content.”

“’Tis better as it is, sire,” replied the knight.

And, with another stately bow to the king, he sprang upon a charger brought him by a groom while the previous discourse took place.

At the same time Jane was provided with a palfrey by Claude, who, it appeared, was among the attendants of the English nobles.

“A word at parting,” said Louis, signing to Jane, who came close up to him.

Lowering his voice to a whisper, he then added, “King Edward must be at Picquigny on the appointed day. Come with him.”

“Rely on me, sire,” she replied.

And, bending low, she joined the knight.

The English nobles then took leave of Louis with every mark of respect, and Lord Hastings assured his majesty that he should experience no further annoyance from the soldiers

who had so much abused his hospitality, and who should thenceforward be kept strictly within the camp.

As they turned to depart, Louis ordered De Comines to escort them to the north gate.

As soon as they were gone, he remarked to Tristan, with a singular smile, "Canst thou not guess the name and rank of that tall knight by whom De Merancourt has been slain?"

"No, sire," replied the provost-marshal; "but I conclude he is some one of importance, from the attention paid him by your majesty."

"So far thou art right, gossip," rejoined Louis. "He is a person of the utmost importance—no other than the King of England."

"The King of England!" exclaimed Tristan, in astonishment. "And your majesty had him in your power, and allowed him to depart! *Tête-Dieu!* I could not have believed it."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW A WOODEN BRIDGE WAS BUILT ACROSS THE SOMME, AT PICQUIGNY, BY LOUIS, FOR HIS PROPOSED INTER- VIEW WITH THE KING OF ENGLAND

Picquigny, the little village selected by Louis XI. for his proposed interview with Edward IV., belonged to the Vidame of Amiens, and was distant about three leagues from that town.

It was situated upon the Somme, which, though not very wide at the point, was extremely deep—a circumstance to which Louis attached the utmost importance, as he did not desire that the English troops should be able to ford the river. On a high, rocky hill dominating the village, stood a large château, bearing a strong resemblance to Windsor Castle;

but this fortress was now in ruins, having been partially destroyed by the Duke de Bourbon.

Having chosen the spot, after due consideration, Louis caused a wooden bridge to be constructed at Picquigny, according to his own plans. In the centre of the bridge, which, though merely intended for a temporary purpose, was solidly built, was a sort of latticed cabinet, or shed, divided in the midst by stout oaken bars, placed so close together, that only a man's arm could be thrust between them. Neither door nor wicket was allowed, consequently no one could pass through the barrier. By this means all danger of a sudden and treacherous attack was avoided.

Roofed with boards, the structure was sufficiently large to contain a dozen persons on each side. The bridge was protected by high rails, and was exceedingly narrow, so that those using it were almost compelled to proceed singly.

Only a small boat, with one oarsman, was to be allowed on the river during the meeting.

Louis had been led to take all these precautions from a terrible incident that had occurred at the meeting between his father, then Dauphin of France, and Duke John of Burgundy, on the bridge of Montereau, and, as he frequently alluded to this tragical occurrence, it may be proper to narrate it.

When Duke John of Burgundy advanced with a powerful army, to raise the siege of Rouen, it was agreed between him and the Dauphin, afterwards Charles VII., that they should hold a meeting at the bridge of Montereau.

In the middle of the bridge a strong barrier was therefore erected, shut by a gate that could be bolted on both sides. All the duke's serving-men tried to dissuade him from the interview, telling him he would be betrayed, but their prayers and entreaties were of no avail. A Jew, belonging to his house, told him if he went he would never return. Nothing would deter him. Setting out with four hundred men-at-

arms, he arrived at Montereau about two o'clock, and at once proceeding to the barrier with his attendants, found the Sire de Beauveau and Tanneguy Duchâtel ready to receive him.

"Monseigneur awaits you," said Tanneguy, bowing.

Having taken the oath, the duke said, "You see that I and the Sire de Navailles are unarmed."

No sooner had he passed on, than Tanneguy urged De Navailles to follow.

The Dauphin was already in the wooden cabinet in the middle of the bridge, with his attendants. The duke advanced, and, taking off his black velvet cap, bent the knee to the prince, who immediately raised him.

Then Tanneguy shouted, "Kill! kill!" Whereupon the Dauphin's attendants struck down the duke with their battle-axes and swords, and likewise slew the Sire de Navailles, who attempted to defend his master.

A crowd of armed men then rushed on the bridge from the side of the town, and all the Burgundian knights were seized and made prisoners.

Such was the terrible occurrence that caused Louis to be so cautious in constructing the barrier at Picquigny.

Apparently, he had no desire to repeat his father's treacherous act, which had been attended by direful consequences, and he probably reflected that if Edward should be slain like the Duke of Burgundy, a large army, with skilful leaders, was close at hand to avenge his death.

But Louis was not altogether free from fear that some treachery might be practised against himself. No gate was therefore allowed in the middle of the bridge.

At length the day arrived appointed for the meeting of the two monarchs.

On the morning a circumstance occurred which, in that superstitious age, could not fail to be regarded as a favorable omen by the whole English army. A white dove alighted on

Edward's pavilion, and remained there till the king set out for the interview.

The first, however, to arrive at Picquigny was King Louis, who was still fearful something might go wrong.

Attended by eight hundred picked men-at-arms, he had with him the Duke de Bourbon, and the Cardinal de Bourbon, Archbishop of Lyons, besides many other nobles and knights. His three favorites, Tristan l'Hermite, Olivier le Dain, and Jacques Coictier, were likewise in attendance upon him.

On this occasion, as a mark of special favor, or it may be from some other motive, Philippe de Comines was attired precisely like his majesty, in a gown of black velvet, and wore round his neck the collar of Saint Michael.

All the arrangements were made in obedience to the king's commands. The bridge had been completed on the day before, and now formed the object to which all eyes were directed.

On one side floated the French oriflamme—on the other, the royal standard of England. A dozen mounted arbalestriers guarded the left bank; while a like number of English archers were stationed at the opposite entrance.

The village of Picquigny, and the partly-demolished château, were occupied by the French men-at-arms, and it was clear that their position was the more advantageous, the bank on this side being high, and the road good, whereas the ground on the other side was flat and marshy, and the causeway extremely narrow.

Had treachery been intended, this approach would have been fraught with danger to Edward. But he had no distrust. Indeed, the sight of his army, drawn up in battle array at no great distance, was well calculated to reassure him.

That mighty host, with its knights clad in glittering mail, its lances, its archers, its men-at-arms, and its long train of artillery, presented a most imposing appearance, and increased the anxiety of Louis to get rid of such a strong hostile force. He

watched Edward as he rode along the narrow and dangerous causeway just described, and could not help admiring his goodly presence.

Splendidly attired in cloth of gold, with his girdle blazing with gems, the English monarch wore a black velvet cap, ornamented with a large *fleur-de-lys* of diamonds. Never did he look more regal than on this occasion; and his stately figure, handsome countenance, and majestic deportment not only excited the admiration of Louis, but of all who beheld him. He rode a magnificently-trapped war-horse, with housings covered with the royal cognizances.

Close behind him, and mounted on a palfrey, came a young esquire, whose slight, graceful figure was displayed to the greatest advantage in a doublet of white velvet, embroidered with silver, hose of white silk, and brodequins of crimson morocco. A cap of blue velvet, adorned with a white plume, covered his sunny locks.

The Duke of Clarence, who came next, was almost as superbly attired as his royal brother, but he could not for a moment be compared with him. Gloucester was absent, having declined to attend the meeting. Then came the Earl of Northumberland, the Marquis of Dorset, and the Lords Hastings and Howard, all four arrayed in blue cloth of gold, and well mounted.

Then followed the Bishop of Lincoln, at that time Chancellor of England. The chancellor was attended by Sir John Cheyne and Sir Thomas Montgomery.

A body-guard of a hundred lances, commanded by Sir Thomas Saint Leger, accompanied the king.

As Edward rode by the side of the deep-flowing river, and gazed at the bridge on which the interview was to take place, some misgivings crossed him, and he began to think he had been outwitted by the wily French king. Was the treaty really as ignominious as it had been styled by the Duke of Burgundy? If so, it might yet be broken.

Agitated by these thoughts, he glanced at Isidore, who reading what was passing in his breast, urged him by a look to go on.

On reaching the pavilion placed near the entrance of the bridge, Edward was greatly surprised to find there was not a French noble—not even a page—stationed there to receive him, but he soon understood that no one could cross the bridge.

Laughing at the unusual precautions taken by Louis, he waited till his retinue had assembled, and then alighting, stepped upon the bridge, closely followed by Isidore.

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHOSE PRESENCE THE MEETING TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THE TWO MONARCHS, AND HOW THE TRUCE AGREED UPON WAS SWORN TO BY THEM

As Edward advanced at a slow and dignified pace, he could see Louis watching him from behind the barrier, like some wild animal peering through the bars of a cage.

On his part, however, the French king was greatly struck by the good looks of the English monarch, for he remarked to De Comines, “By my faith! our good cousin is very handsome.”

“And note you not, sire, that the king has got Isidore with him?” rejoined the councillor.

“Ay; all will go well,” said Louis.

With the French king were a dozen nobles—the most important among them being the Duke de Bourbon, and his brother, the Cardinal,—but they were almost hidden from view by the barrier.

Behind Edward came the Duke of Clarence, the chancellor, the Earl of Northumberland, the Marquis of Dorset, Lord Hastings, and other nobles and knights.

On arriving within a few paces of Louis, whom he could now distinguish perfectly, with De Comines standing behind him in precisely similar attire, Edward removed his velvet cap, and made a profound reverence, almost bending his knee to the ground.

Louis returned the salutation with equal form, after which they both arose and embraced each other as well as they could through the bars.

“You are right welcome, cousin,” exclaimed the French king, in tones of the utmost cordiality, and with a look of perfect good nature. “There is no one on earth whom I more desire to see than you. Heaven be praised that we meet at last under such agreeable circumstances, and with such kindly feelings towards each other.”

“I heartily reciprocate your majesty’s sentiments,” replied Edward. “I am overjoyed to meet a monarch who has justly acquired a reputation for consummate genius and wisdom. Believe, I pray you, that it has been matter of the greatest regret to me whenever I have had a difference with your majesty.”

“Let all that be forgotten, cousin,” said Louis, with great *bonhomie*. “We are good friends now, and I hope shall long continue so. I rejoice to see you, and all those with you—and not the least, the young esquire who has lately been my guest. But a truce to compliments! Let us to business.”

“By all means, sire,” replied Edward. “We are quite ready.”

At a sign from him, the chancellor advanced. He was in his ecclesiastical habits, and spoke as follows, in solemn and impressive accents:

“When two of the most powerful monarchs on earth meet together to settle a dispute—not by arms, but peaceably and

reasonably—it is a joyful thing for themselves and for their people, but it is also highly pleasing to our blessed Lord, whose kingdom is of peace. It was said of old that in Picquigny a great peace would be concluded, and the prediction has now come to pass, and in a most remarkable manner. Moreover, another wondrous thing has happened. This very morn, a dove, white as silver, alighted on the tent of the King of England, and remained there for some time, in the sight of the whole army.”

“Showing that the peace is approved by Heaven,” said Louis, bowing his head reverently; “since the dove is the emblem of peace. Did not the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, appear at the baptism of our Lord, who is the Prince of Peace? There cannot be a better omen.”

After reciting a prayer, during which Louis knelt down devoutly, the chancellor proceeded to read the conditions of the treaty.

This done, the most important part of the performance took place, and the incident excited great curiosity among the spectators.

Owing to the separation of the two monarchs by the barrier, some little difficulty was experienced in carrying out the ceremonial about to be described; but, at last, it was satisfactorily accomplished.

Each sovereign, placing one hand upon a missal, and the other on a portion of the true cross held towards him by the chancellor, solemnly swore to observe and maintain the conditions of the treaty, which was to remain in force for seven years.

The guardians of the treaty, on the part of the King of England, were the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, the Chancellor, the Keeper of the Privy Seal, the Governor of the Cinque Ports, and the Lieutenant-governor of Calais.

Those on the part of the King of France were the Sire de Beaujeu, and Jean de Bourbon, Admiral of France. Next,

the King of France engaged, not for himself alone, but for his successors, to pay to the King of England, annually, the sum of fifty thousand crowns, to be delivered at the Tower of London; promising, also, to contract for a loan with the bankers Medicis, of Florence.

A marriage was likewise agreed upon between the dauphin and the Lady Elizabeth of England—Louis agreeing to pay to the princess a pension of sixty thousand crowns.

On his part, Edward agreed to return to England with his whole army, as soon as he had received the sum of seventy-five thousand crowns, without taking or attacking any town on the way, and to leave as hostages the Lord Howard and Sir John Cheyne—with one other person, to be named by the King of France.

A final stipulation was made by Louis for the liberation, on payment of a ransom of fifty thousand crowns, of Margaret of Anjou, then a prisoner in the Tower of London.

All being arranged, Louis, who was in high glee, said to Edward:

“You must come and see us in Paris, cousin. I will *fête* you as well as I can, and you will find there some of the fairest ladies in France, who will be delighted to see a monarch so renowned for good looks and gallantry.”

“Your majesty tempts me very strongly,” replied Edward. “Having heard so much of the Parisian dames, I would fain ascertain whether they are as charming as represented.”

“Report scarcely does them justice, as you will find, cousin,” said Louis, still laughing.

“Nay, then; I must needs accept your majesty’s invitation,” cried Edward. “Before I return, I will spend a month with you at the Louvre.”

Louis seemed rather disconcerted. A month was much more than he had calculated upon. But Isidore came to his assistance.

“What will become of the army while your majesty is

enjoying yourself at Paris for a month?" remarked the page.

"Bah! the army can remain at Calais," replied Edward, carelessly.

"That will scarcely suit his majesty of France, methinks," said Isidore. "Besides, it will infringe the main condition of the treaty."

"You are right," cried Louis, hastily. "In my desire to entertain my good cousin, I had overlooked this difficulty. I fear I must defer the pleasure of seeing your majesty to another occasion," he added, to Edward.

"But the chances are I shall not be in France again," said Edward. "If I neglect this opportunity, I may never see your beautiful city."

"Oh, your majesty will be sure to come over when the Lady Elizabeth is married to the dauphin," said Isidore.

"Certainly," replied Louis. "I shall expect you, then, cousin, and will prepare some magnificent *fêtes* for you."

"But the fair dames will have grown old by that time," said Edward.

"Others, equally fair, will have succeeded them," rejoined Louis. "And now a word, cousin. As you are aware, I have stipulated for a third hostage. My choice falls on this young esquire. He shall go with me to Amiens, but I will send him back before you embark at Calais."

"Are you content with the arrangement?" said Edward to the esquire.

"Perfectly," was the reply. "I have experienced too much kindness from his majesty to entertain a doubt that he will take good care of me."

"Then be it so," said Edward. "If you fail to come to Calais, I shall return to fetch you," he added, with a laugh.

At the King of England's request, De Comines was then presented to him by Louis.

Edward received him very graciously, and shook hands with him through the barrier.

"'Tis not the first time I have met the Sire de Comines," he said. "I saw him in Flanders, and was much beholden to him for the trouble he took to do me a service at the time of the revolts of the Earl of Warwick. I hope to have an early opportunity of proving my gratitude. Should he visit our court, he will be right welcome."

De Comines bowed, and some other presentations took place; after which the nobles on each side retired, and the monarchs continued their conference.

They spoke of the Duke of Burgundy, and Edward described his last interview with the duke, and mentioned that he had refused to become a party to the treaty.

"What shall we do, cousin, if he persists in his refusal?" asked Louis.

"Possibly he may change his tone," said Edward. "But if he continues obstinate, your majesty must deal with him as you think fit. He will have no further aid from me."

"And what of the Duke of Bretagne?" asked Louis. "Shall I make war upon him, if he holds aloof?"

"Never with my consent, sire," rejoined Edward, somewhat sternly. "Should he be attacked, I shall be constrained to assist him with all my power. The Duke of Bretagne has proved a good and faithful ally, and in my necessities I have never found so true a friend. Therefore, I am bound to stand by him, and by Saint George, I will do so!"

A cynical smile lighted up the French king's countenance.

"I do not wonder your majesty should feel grateful to the Duke of Bretagne," he said, in a sarcastic tone, "when I recollect that the duke holds in his hands the last representative of the House of Lancaster, and the sole aspirant to the crown of England. As long as Henry, Earl of Richmond, is in safe keeping, your majesty has nothing to fear."

Edward made no reply to this observation, and Louis went on.

“There is only one person left about whom it is needful to speak,” he said. “You will guess that I allude to the Constable Saint Pol. I scarcely think you will interpose in his behalf.”

“Act as you will in regard to the traitor, sire,” cried Edward, almost fiercely. “He has proved false to both of us, and deserves death.”

“My determination is to bring him to the scaffold,” said Louis; “but I am glad your majesty approves the design.”

With this, the conference ended.

After some further mutual expressions of regard, the sincerity of which may well be doubted, the two monarchs again embraced each other through the barrier, and separated.

CHAPTER XX

HOW IT WAS SAID AT THE FRENCH COURT THAT SIX HUNDRED CASKS OF WINE AND A PENSION SENT KING EDWARD BACK TO ENGLAND

Before Edward quitted Picquigny, the Lord Howard, Sir John Cheyne, and Isidore, who were to remain as hostages with the King of France, were sent across the river in the boat we have alluded to, and accompanied Louis to Amiens.

Apartments were assigned them in the Château de Saint Remi, and Isidore returned to his former lodgings.

In the evening Louis sent for him, and said :

“I know you do not like to be separated from the king your master. You shall return to him to-morrow. I have

only brought you here to have a little conversation with you, and make you some presents."

"I have already told your majesty that I do not desire any presents," replied Isidore.

"But I shall be highly offended if you refuse this necklace," he added, opening a case, and displaying a magnificent collar of glittering diamonds.

"I should be sorry to offend your majesty," replied Isidore, unable to resist the splendid gift.

"And I must also insist upon your acceptance of twelve thousand crowns. Nay, you need not hesitate. None of his majesty's attendants are so scrupulous."

"But I suppose you expect me to do something for the money, sire?" observed Isidore, with an arch smile.

"I wish you to entertain a pleasant remembrance of the meeting at Picquigny," said Louis; "and to keep me in the king's good opinion."

"That will be very easy to do, sire."

"I am not so sure. I have many enemies. I desire to stand well with my good cousin. May I count on your good offices with him?"

"Entirely, sire."

"I was foolish enough to invite him to Paris," pursued Louis. "I did not foresee the consequences of the visit. But it is quite plain that the attractions of the place might detain him longer than would be desirable. You yourself might be supplanted in his favor."

"I will take care he does not go to Paris, sire," rejoined Isidore.

"Enough," cried Louis. "To-morrow you shall be escorted to the English camp. Always feel certain I am your friend. If there is any favor I can grant, hesitate not to ask it. Adieu!"

Next day, the Duke of Gloucester, who had declined to be present at the meeting at Picquigny, came to Amiens, and

was exceedingly well entertained by Louis, who presented him with some magnificent silver vessels and plate, together with two richly caparisoned steeds. Rich gifts were likewise bestowed on the Duke of Clarence.

So extraordinarily lavish was Louis, that not a single English noble visited him, but he received a present of some kind. The large sums of money promised to the Lord Hastings, the lord chancellor, the Marquis of Dorset, and others, were punctually paid. Nothing was omitted.

Isidore was escorted to the English camp by the Sire de Comines, who took with him seventy-five thousand crowns for the king.

Having received this amount, Edward forthwith raised his camp, and marched back to Calais, where he rested for a few days, and then, greatly to the satisfaction of the wily Louis, embarked with his whole army, and arrived safely at Dover.

BOOK III

THE DUKE OF CLARENCE



CHAPTER I

HOW ISIDORE INFORMED MARGARET OF ANJOU THAT HER CAPTIVITY WAS AT END, AND HOW THE ANNOUNCE- MENT WAS RECEIVED

In a gloomy chamber, in the upper story of a fortification situated in the north-east angle of the ancient wall surrounding the inner ward of the Tower of London, sat a majestic dame.

The chamber was almost circular in form, and in the stone walls, which were of enormous thickness, were three deep recesses, very wide at the entrance, but terminated by narrow grated outlets.

Communicating with this prison-lodging was a small cell, contrived in the thickness of the wall. The room was scantily furnished, and contained only an oak table, and two or three chairs of the same material.

Against the wall, near one of the recesses, was fixed a crucifix, and beneath it was a prie-dieu of the simplest fashion.

She who was confined within this prison-chamber was not more than forty-five, but she looked much older, for sorrows, such as few have known, had done their work with her. Her frame was wasted, but not bowed; and her features, though stamped with grief, still retained traces of their former beauty. Her eye was bright, and her expression proud, showing that, despite the agonizing affliction she had endured, her spirit was unsubdued. Her gown was of dark blue velvet, then used for mourning, and her hair was covered by a white linen frontlet. This majestic dame was Margaret of Anjou, once Queen of England, widow of Henry VI., and mother of Prince Edward, ruthlessly slain at Tewkesbury.

Margaret heard the door of her prison open, but believing it to be the gaoler who had come in, and being occupied with her devotions at the time, she did not raise her eyes from her missal.

When she looked up, at length, she perceived a youth of slight and graceful figure standing at a little distance from her.

It was Isidore. The royal livery in which he was clad, and which was embroidered with the badge of the House of York, displeased the queen; but the demeanor of the young esquire was exceedingly respectful, and his looks expressed profound sympathy.

"I come from the king, gracious madame," said Isidore, with a profound obeisance. "I have just returned with my royal master from France."

"Then you can tell me how your master's ignominious retreat was conducted," rejoined Margaret, scornfully. "After all his preparations and boasting, I am told he has not fought a battle."

"He has concluded a very advantageous treaty of peace with the King of France, madame, and that is better than a victory," replied Isidore.

"Such a peace is more disgraceful than a defeat!" cried Margaret, sharply. "'Tis plain, Louis has overreached him, and I am glad of it. But I should have been better pleased if you had brought me word that Edward's host had been routed, and he himself and his brothers slain. Then I would have rewarded you with my last jewel."

"I hoped, madame, that your wrath against the king had in some degree abated," said Isidore.

"My wrath against the blood-stained usurper, whom you style king, but who has neither right nor title to the throne on which he sits, will never abate," rejoined Margaret. "Never can I pardon him who massacred my son, who ought now to be king, and who caused my husband, who *was* king, to be foully assassinated. Maledictions, such as a widow

and a bereaved mother can utter in her agony, have been invoked by me on his head. Daily have I implored Heaven to avenge my wrongs. I have prayed that Edward may be cut off in his pride, and he shall be cut off! I have prayed that his race may be extinguished, and it shall be so! I have prayed that all dear to him may perish, and they shall perish miserably!"

"Oh, madame, this is too terrible!" cried Isidore, trembling and turning pale.

"What is it to thee, if they perish?" said Margaret. "Thou art naught to him—ha?"

"No, madame; but such imprecations are treasonable, and I ought not to listen to them."

"Repeat them to thy master," said Margaret, haughtily.

"No, madame," replied Isidore; "he shall hear naught from me likely to exasperate him against you. The king's feelings towards you now are kindly, and I would not change them."

"I would rather he hated me than loved me," said Margaret. "I am not so abject as to ask his pity. Fallen as I am, I know he fears me still."

"Calm yourself, I beseech you, gracious madame," said Isidore, after a pause, "and listen to me. I have said that I bring you good news."

"Is Edward on his death-bed, or hath the relentless Gloucester been slain?" demanded Margaret, sternly.

"I have come to announce to you, madame, that your captivity is at an end."

"Is this so?" said Margaret, looking steadfastly at the speaker. "Then, indeed, Edward of York is greatly changed, for I thought that naught but self-interest could move that heart of stone. How came this to pass? He hath not done it, I am well assured, of his own free will."

"King Louis hath agreed to pay a ransom of fifty thousand crowns for your liberation, madame," said Isidore.

"Then I owe nothing to Edward," cried Margaret, joyfully. "'Tis to Louis I am indebted for freedom?"

"'Tis to your august father, King René, that you owe your liberation, gracious madame," said Isidore. "To accomplish this, he has ceded Provence to Louis."

"Has the king, my father, made this great sacrifice for me?" cried Margaret. "Oh, this is too much!"

And sinking into the chair, she covered her face with her hands, and wept aloud and unrestrainedly.

These were the first tears she had shed since she beheld the body of her murdered husband borne on a bier from the Tower to be exhibited at Saint Paul's, and they greatly relieved her.

Isidore turned aside his head, unable to control his emotion.

Margaret was the first to break the silence. Scarcely conscious that she was not alone, she murmured:

"Why has my father done this? 'Tis too much—too much! I have cost him his beautiful Provence—his Provence that he loved so well! He has given up that sunny land, with its vines and olives, and cities near the bright blue main, that he may embrace me once more! He does not know that I have grown old—that I am no longer the fair daughter he doted on. He should have let me die here, in this prison-chamber, and kept his dear Provence."

"You are dearer to King René than Provence, madame," said Isidore, turning round, and gazing at her with streaming eyes. "I am sure your royal father would have died of grief if he had not beheld you again."

"I thank thee for the words, gentle youth," said Margaret, much moved. "Though thou wearest the livery of my deadly enemy, thou hast a tender heart."

And she extended her hand to him. Isidore bent down, and reverently pressed it to his lips.

"I would thou hadst a better master, gentle youth," said

Margaret. "I cannot ask you to go with me; nor is it likely thou wouldst share my fortunes, if I did."

"I cannot leave the king, madame," said Isidore.

"Then let me give thee one piece of counsel," said Margaret. "Make the most of thy present fortune. Assuredly, thou wilt not have Edward long."

"Oh, madame! fill me not with these direful forebodings, I entreat you! I should die if I lost the king."

"Die if you lost him!" exclaimed Margaret. "Let me look more narrowly at thee," she added, seizing Isidore's hand. "'Tis as I suspected. Thou art a woman! Thou art Edward's beautiful favorite, Jane Shore! Nay, deny it not. I heard thou hadst accompanied him in his expedition to France, in male attire."

"Suffer me to depart, gracious madame," said Jane. "I have no more to say."

"But I have more to say to thee," rejoined Margaret, still detaining her. "Did thy master send thee to insult me? Had I not been a prisoner, thou wouldst not have dared approach me. I would have had thee thrust from my presence."

"Madame, my desire has been to spare you pain. I deemed my disguise sufficient, and did not for a moment suppose you would recognize me."

"I recognized thee not. Thou hast betrayed thyself," said Margaret. "But thou hast learned something from me—something thou wilt not forget. My lips have pronounced thy fate. Thou art dear to Edward—very dear, it may be. Thou shalt perish miserably."

"Recall your words, gracious madame, I implore you!" cried Jane. "I have done nothing to offend you. On the contrary, my desire has been to serve you. From the bottom of my heart, I have pitied you——"

"Thou pity me!" cried Margaret, with sovereign scorn. "I would not have thy pity. Back to thy lord and master,

and tell him all I have said. Bid him act as he will. He can send the merciless Gloucester, if he desires, to slay me. I am defenceless, and a prisoner, but I have been a queen, and I will brook no insult. Begone !”

So imperious was her tone, and so energetic her gesture, that Jane attempted no remonstrance, but stepped back to the barred door of the prison-chamber, and tapped against it. It was instantly opened by the gaoler, and she departed.

CHAPTER II

HOW CLARENCE REVEALED HIS DESIGNS TO JANE

On his return from the inglorious expedition to France, enriched by the large sum paid him by the wily Louis XI., Edward, always addicted to the pleasures of the table, gave himself up to ease and enjoyment.

At Windsor Castle, where he kept his court, there was now continual feasting and revelry. Grand banquets and entertainments were of almost daily occurrence, and the luxurious monarch passed his time in a constant round of pleasure.

So indolent and enervated did he become by these habits of self-indulgence, that he neglected all hardy exercises—seldom hunted, though he had heretofore been passionately fond of the chase—and scarcely ever appeared in the tilt-yard, though he was the most expert jousting of his day.

Worse than all, he neglected public affairs, for he now disliked anything that gave him trouble, and left their management to the queen, who displayed consummate ability in directing all matters entrusted to her care. She had now obtained a complete ascendancy over her consort, and maintained it to the last.

The only person who strove to rouse the king from the indolent state into which he had sunk was Jane, but she was unsuccessful in her efforts.

At that time, the court was divided into two parties, strongly opposed to each other; the most powerful and the most numerous consisting of the new nobility, created by the influence of the queen, and, consequently, devoted to her interests.

At the head of this party was her brother, Earl Rivers, whom she had contrived to marry to the richest heiress in the kingdom, and who was now governor to her son, the young Prince of Wales. Next in importance to Lord Rivers was the Marquis of Dorset, the queen's eldest son by her first marriage, who had been recently appointed constable of the tower, and keeper of the king's treasures.

Most of the old nobility had been banished from court at the instance of the queen, who desired their removal on account of their supposed hostility to herself; but three of her avowed enemies still enjoyed the king's favor—namely, the Duke of Buckingham, lord high constable; Lord Hastings, grand chamberlain; and Lord Stanley.

Singular to relate, the queen manifested no jealousy whatever towards her inconstant husband's beautiful favorite, and even went so far as to conciliate her; frequent conferences taking place between them in private at the hunting lodge, where Jane resided.

Edward had now been for several months at Windsor, which might not inaptly be described as the Castle of Indolence, when the Duke of Clarence, who had absented himself from court in consequence of some affront offered him by the queen, suddenly re-appeared at court.

He was unaccompanied by the duchess, whom he had been obliged to leave at Ludlow Castle in Shropshire, on account of the feeble state of her health.

Edward welcomed him with his accustomed cordiality; but

the queen received him with marked coldness. She regarded him with distrust, having received information that he was secretly plotting against the king.

On the morning after his arrival at the castle, the duke paid a formal visit to Mistress Shore, who resided, as heretofore, at the hunting lodge, and was received by her with as much ceremony as if she had been queen. She was splendidly dressed, and looked surprisingly well; and Clarence really thought, as he failed not to tell her, that she quite eclipsed the most exalted lady at court in beauty.

Jane accepted the compliment, but did not appear much gratified by it. She disliked the duke, for she was well aware of his insincerity.

There was little resemblance, either in person or manner, between Clarence and his royal brother. Yet the duke was very handsome, and possessed a fine figure. But his features had a sinister expression, and his manner was haughty and repelling, though not wanting in dignity. His habiliments were of the richest velvet, and his girdle and cap blazed with diamonds.

None of the haughtiness of which we have just spoken was perceptible in his deportment towards Jane. On the contrary, he was extremely deferential to her; so much so, as to excite her suspicion.

"I am sorry to hear the duchess is unwell, my lord," she said, as she motioned him to a seat. "I trust it is only a slight indisposition."

"She is suffering from extreme debility, replied Clarence. "She has not left her couch for a month. She is under the care of Ankaret Twynhyo, a young woman of extraordinary skill, who understands her case perfectly."

"You are fortunate in having such a nurse, my lord," rejoined Jane. "Methinks you called her Ankaret Twynhyo. 'Tis a singular name. She cannot be an English woman."

"No; she is from Ghent, and was recommended to us by

my sister, the Duchess of Burgundy. She is as well skilled in medicine as a physician, and I have the greatest faith in her. If anyone can save the duchess, Ankaret can."

"I fear, from what you now say, my lord, that the duchess must be dangerously ill," remarked Jane.

"I hope not," replied Clarence. "But she seems to lose strength daily. However, everything will be done for her by Ankaret. But let us speak of the king. He does not look well, and is much changed since I saw him last. What ails him?"

"Indolence, my lord; nothing but indolence," replied Jane. "You will render him a great service if you can induce him to take more exercise."

"If you have failed, madame, who have more influence over him than anyone else, how can I hope to succeed? Perhaps," he said, with a singular smile, "a fresh insurrection might rouse him to activity. But I cannot get up one merely to effect his cure. The consequences of such a step, though beneficial to him, might be fatal to myself."

"I desire no such violent remedy, my lord," replied Jane. "But you are right. A rebellion would infallibly restore his energies."

"Unluckily there are no rebels left," observed Clarence. "All the Lancastrians are slain, except Harry of Richmond, and he is held in captivity by the Duke of Bretagne."

"I quite despair of rousing the king," remarked Jane. "All my efforts have proved fruitless."

"I do not wonder you are uneasy on his majesty's account, madame," said Clarence. "I am told he commits too many excesses, and drinks far too much of the good wine of Chalusse sent him by Louis. If he be not checked—and who shall check him since you cannot?—most assuredly he will be seized by a sudden apoplexy."

"You alarm me, my lord!" cried Jane.

"I do not wish to alarm you, madame," pursued the duke;

“but you ought to be prepared for such an event, since it is highly probable. Consider what would then be your position!”

She looked earnestly at him, but did not speak.

“You will always have a friend in me, madame,” he said, with a certain deliberation.

“And in the queen, too, my lord!” cried Jane.

“’Twere best not to calculate too much upon her majesty,” said the duke. “In the event of the king’s sudden death—which Heaven forbid!—great confusion would ensue, and great changes take place. The two princes would be set aside. By right, the crown belongs to me. I will not disturb Edward, but I will not allow his son to succeed him.”

Astonishment kept Jane silent, and the duke went on.

“As I have intimated, Edward has no title to the crown. It can be proved that he is not the son of my father, the Duke of York. Neither is he lawfully married to her whom he styles his ‘queen.’ A former wife is yet living—the Lady Eleanor Butler—to whom he was privately wedded by the Bishop of Bath, who can prove the marriage.”

“You amaze me, my lord!” cried Jane.

“From what I have stated,” pursued the duke, “you will see that the children of Elizabeth Woodville cannot succeed to the throne. My title is incontestable. Behold this document, madame.” And as he spoke, he took a parchment from his breast. “This is an authentic copy of the Act of Parliament passed when the Earl of Warwick was next heir to the crown after the male issue of Henry the Sixth. King Henry died in the Tower, as you know. Prince Edward, his only son, was slain at Tewkesbury. I am Edward’s successor. I ought now to be king—and, in effect, I am king. For many reasons, I shall leave my brother Edward in quiet possession. But when the throne becomes vacant—as it will be ere long—I shall occupy it; not his son!”

A brief pause ensued, after which the duke said, "Mark me, the Act has never been repealed, and is therefore still in force. I pray you look at it, madame. Convince yourself that I have spoken the truth."

"I do not desire to look at the Act, my lord," she replied. "You must convince others of the legality of your title, not me."

"I have already done so, madame," he replied, replacing the parchment in his doublet. "All the old nobility are satisfied, and will support me. Besides, I can raise an army in the North."

"Be not too sure of that, my lord; be not too sure that the old nobility will support you," cried Jane. "'Tis possible you may not survive the king, your brother, whose youthful son you desire to supplant. Heaven may thwart your designs. Your imprudence in divulging your scheme to me may cost you your head!"

"And you intend to betray me to the king, madame?" said Clarence.

"I shall reveal all you have said to me, my lord," she rejoined. "You cannot complain. I did not invoke your confidence, and have given you no pledge of secrecy."

"Beware what you do, madame!" said Clarence, sternly. "You imagine you hold my life in your hands, but you are mistaken. I exacted no promise of secrecy from you, because I knew you would not be bound by it; but you will be silent when you learn what you have to fear. Make the revelation to Edward, and I will meet it with a counter-charge that will ruin you forever in his esteem! Trust me, your wisest course will be to become my ally. The time will soon come when I shall be able to reward my friends, and I shall not forget those who serve me well. Several of the king's confidants are leagued with me against the queen and her family. Her enemies must naturally be my friends."

"But I am not the queen's enemy," said Jane.

“That will not pass with me!” exclaimed Clarence, incredulously. “Again I ask, may I count upon you as an ally?”

After a moment's reflection, Jane said, “What would you have me do?”

“Nothing that will give you trouble,” he replied. “Certain matters must come to your knowledge that it may be desirable I should know, especially when I am absent from court.”

“But how communicate them to you?” she asked.

“I have a spy in the king's household, who will convey a letter safely to me,” replied the duke.

“His name?” asked Jane.

“Baldwin,” replied the duke.

“Can he be trusted?” she asked.

“Perfectly,” answered Clarence. “He is devoted to me.”

“Here comes the king!” exclaimed Jane, as the door was suddenly thrown open by an usher.

“Be silent, on your life, madame!” said Clarence, in a low tone. “I am playing too deep a game not to have calculated all chances. The slightest indiscretion on your part will only precipitate matters.”

Next moment, Edward entered the room, attended by his jester, Malbouche.

CHAPTER III

HOW THE KING SHOOK OFF HIS LETHARGY

Personally, Edward was not much changed ; but he had an indolent and enervated appearance, that proclaimed the luxurious habits in which he indulged. He was arrayed in a robe of the richest velvet, lined with fur, and his jerkin was magnificently embroidered.

After returning the obeisances made him, he sank into a fauteuil, as if the exertion he had just undergone had been too much for him.

“Bring me a cup of wine,” he said to a page, who still remained in attendance.

“If I might venture to interfere, I would advise your majesty to refrain till dinner,” said Jane.

“The walk from the castle has made me thirsty,” he replied, emptying the large silver flagon brought him by a page. “’Tis right good Gascoigne wine,” he added. “Louis may have deceived me in some things ; but he has sent me good wine. He has no such wine as this, I am told, at his own table.”

“Louis drinks very sparingly, and mingles his wine with water,” observed Jane ; “and it would be well if your majesty would follow his example.”

“Nay, by my faith ! that I will never do,” cried Edward. “What ! spoil wine like that I have just drunk, with water ! That were indeed a folly, of which not even Malbouche would be guilty !”

“Nay, my liege,” rejoined the jester ; “I have just made a vow that I will touch no wine for three months.”

"What induced thee to make a vow so foolish?" remarked Edward.

"Because I drank too much yesterday, my liege," replied Malbouche.

"For the same reason, I might make a like vow," said the king, laughing.

"'Twere well for your majesty if you did, and kept your vow rigorously," said Jane.

"What! Would you have me forswear wine altogether?" rejoined Edward.

"I would," said Jane.

"That were a penance far too severe," observed Clarence. "When his majesty has finished the famous Chalosse sent him by King Louis, he may think about it. My wine, by preference, is Malmsey."

"Say you so, brother?" cried Edward. "Happily, I can suit your taste. More wine!" he added to the page. "A cup of Malmsey for the Duke of Clarence."

"And for your majesty?"

"Chalosse," replied the king. "Malmsey is too sweet for me."

Before the page went forth, Jane called him to her. Presently he returned, bearing two goblets on a salver, one of which he offered to the duke.

"Like you the wine, brother?" inquired Edward.

"'Tis excellent!" cried Clarence. "No other wine shall pass my lips, if I can help it. My last draught shall be of Malmsey."

"I trust your wish may be gratified, brother," observed the king. "'Tis better than some vile medicinal potion. Ah! thou hast poisoned me!" he ejaculated, as he well-nigh emptied the cup. "What hast thou given me?"

"Cold water, an' please your majesty," replied the page, scarcely able to repress a smile at the grimace made by the king.

"Nay, your majesty must chide me," remarked Jane. "He merely obeyed my order. Finish the cup, I pray you. 'Twill clear your head for business."

"I have no business to attend to," replied the king. "The day shall be entirely devoted to amusement."

"As all your majesty's are, and as all mine should be, were I king," remarked Malbouche.

"Will you not ride in the park?" said Jane. "The day is delightful."

"No; 'tis too hot. I am better here," said Edward, indolently. "Bring your lute, and sing to me—the while my brother Clarence and myself amuse ourselves with cards and dice."

"Ever some trifling amusement," sighed Jane, preparing to obey. "Nothing will rouse him."

Just at this moment, the door was again opened, and the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Hastings were ushered in.

"Welcome, my lords," cried Edward. "You are just in time for a game at cards. Sit down, I pray you."

"My liege," replied Buckingham, "we are sorry to interrupt you; but you must needs return with us to the castle. A council has been hastily summoned, and your presence at it is absolutely necessary."

"Be it what it may, you must dispense with me," replied Edward. "I am not in the mood for business."

"'Tis a matter of the utmost importance, my liege," remonstrated Hastings. "The expenses of your household have largely increased, and must be provided for. No further burden can safely be laid upon the nation."

"Then the grants from the crown must be resumed," said Edward. "There is no other way to raise money. We have levied large sums from the clergy."

"What do I hear?" cried Clarence, starting up. "The crown grants resumed! Then I shall lose my lands. Your majesty cannot contemplate such a step?"

“Money must be had, brother,” replied Edward, calmly, “My household, as you have just heard, is expensive.”

“But the expenses are not to be defrayed by me,” cried Clarence, angrily. “I protest against a measure so unjust—vehemently protest against it.”

“The council will listen to your objections, brother,” said Edward, calmly.

“But they will be guided by your majesty,” rejoined the duke. “Be their decision what it may, I will not part with my possessions without a struggle.”

“Reserve what you have to say for the council, brother,” said Edward. “Come with me. I promise you a fair hearing.”

Then, rising from his seat, and instantaneously resuming all his wonted dignity of manner, he said to the two nobles :

“My lords, I attend you.”

By a powerful effort, he had completely shaken off his lethargy. His figure seemed loftier, and his countenance assumed a wholly different expression from that which it had just worn.

The transformation was so remarkable, that the beholders were struck by it, and none more so than Jane, who gazed at him with admiration.

As he turned to bid her adieu, she said to him in a low tone :

“If I never beheld your majesty again, I should rejoice at this blessed change !”

Edward then went forth, accompanied by the Duke of Clarence and the two nobles, and proceeded through the vineyard to the castle.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHAT MANNER THE DUCHESS OF CLARENCE WAS POISONED BY ANKARET TWYNHYO; AND OF THE FATE OF THE POISONER

As the Duke of Clarence entered the upper ward of the castle with the king, a messenger, who had just arrived, approached him, and presented him with a letter.

Struck by the man's looks, the duke said to him :

"Thou bring'st ill news, I fear?"

"My lord," replied the messenger, "when I left Ludlow Castle the duchess had not many hours to live. Mistress Ankaret Twynhyo ordered me to convey this letter with all speed to your grace, and I have come as swiftly as I could."

"Does Mistress Ankaret give no hopes of the duchess's recovery?" said Clarence.

"None, my lord!" replied the messenger. "'Tis scarce probable you will find her grace alive on your return."

"I will start at once!" cried the duke. "Heaven grant I may not arrive too late! Your majesty has heard the sad tidings brought by this man, and will excuse my hasty departure."

"Not only excuse it, brother, but urge it," said Edward. "Leave the letter with me, that I may read what the nurse says."

"I have not yet opened the letter, my liege," said Clarence, uneasily.

"No matter!" cried Edward. "There can be no secrets in it. Give it me."

And he took the letter from the duke. To hide his confu-

sion, Clarence hurried away without taking formal leave of the king, or bidding adieu to the two nobles.

“I am alarming myself without cause,” he thought. “Ankaret would be sure to write most guardedly. Yet she might say something that would awaken Edward’s suspicions. ’Tis unlucky the letter should fall into his hands.”

Thus ruminating, he mounted his steed and quitted the castle, attended by the half-dozen retainers he had brought with him.

As soon as he was gone, the king remarked, with a singular smile, to the two nobles :

“If the duchess dies—and it seems she will die—Clarence will soon seek another spouse, and I foretell that his choice will fall on Mary of Burgundy. When the duke was slain at Nanci, and his immense territories devolved on his daughter, I felt sure my greedy brother would have grasped at such a prize, had not his hand been tied. But now he is free—or will be free—there is nothing to prevent him from trying to obtain the great heiress. But he has counted without me, for I shall thwart his scheme.”

Both his hearers smiled at the king’s remark.

“Let us see what the letter contains,” pursued Edward, opening it.

As he scanned its contents, his brow grew dark, and his looks proclaimed that he had made some startling discovery.

“Beyond doubt, this Ankaret Twynhyo is a poisoner,” he exclaimed. “Mark what she says in this letter, and judge : ‘The draught wrought as expected, and as your grace desired. For a short time, the duchess seemed to rally, but she soon grew worse again, and is now rapidly sinking. I shall try the effect of another draught—but with little hope of saving her.’ Here is a plain intimation that the poisonous draught has done its work.”

“’Tis not quite plain to me, my liege,” remarked Hastings. “The words may bear a different construction.”

“I do not think so,” cried Edward. “The woman shall be arrested and interrogated. I have no doubt whatever of her guilt. I am certain she has administered poison to the duchess.”

Thereupon, he proceeded to the council-chamber.

Early next morning, the Duke of Clarence, who had continued his rapid journey throughout the night, came in sight of the towers of Ludlow Castle.

Picturesquely situated on the banks of the River Corve, near its junction with the Teme, this commanding pile, which formed one of the noblest baronial residences in the kingdom, had been occupied by Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, Clarence's father; but after the battle of Wakefield, at which the Duke of York was slain, the castle was dismantled by Henry VI., and for some time neglected.

At a subsequent period, it was bestowed by Edward on his brother Clarence, who restored it to all its pristine splendor, and placed a strong garrison within its walls. Here the ambitious and treacherous duke planned his schemes for securing the crown.

On arriving at the castle, Clarence's first inquiries were as to the state of the duchess, and on learning that she still breathed, he hurried to her room.

In a carved oak bedstead, in a richly furnished chamber, lay the emaciated figure of the once beautiful Isabella, eldest daughter of the great Earl of Warwick.

A mortal pallor overspread her countenance, and the damps of death were gathering on her brow. It was evident dissolution was at hand, and that the vital spark was about to quit its earthly tabernacle.

The duchess was speechless and incapable of movement, but her eyes were open, and were turned towards the duke as he entered the chamber. On her breast was laid a small crucifix, but she was unable to raise it.

Amid the deep hush of the chamber could be heard the

voice of a priest, who was reciting the prayers for a departing soul.

Partly concealed by the richly embroidered curtains, stood Ankaret Twynhyo, a tall, dark complexioned, handsome woman, of middle age.

She had a very striking countenance, owing to the peculiar expression of her large black eyes. She was plainly attired in a kirtle of dark red camlet, and wore a white coverchief.

Clarence saw her as he entered, but avoided her glance, and looked only at the duchess, whose dying gaze was fixed upon him.

He took his wife's hand, but it was cold, and could not return his pressure. He questioned her by his looks, and she tried to respond, for she evidently knew him.

In vain! The agony came on, and the light within her eyes was extinguished.

The duke threw himself on his knees beside the bed; and again there was a deep hush, broken only by his sobs, and by the voice of the priest.

At a later hour, the duke was alone with Ankaret, in his cabinet. He questioned her as to the contents of the letter she had sent him.

"Has it not reached you?" she cried. "I ordered Colville to deliver it into your grace's own hands."

"It was snatched from me by the king before I could open it," said Clarence. "Heaven grant there was nothing in it to damage me!"

"It is unlucky the letter should fall into the king's hands," said Ankaret. "But your grace need have no uneasiness. I wrote most carefully."

"If the king's suspicions are aroused, they are not easily allayed," said Clarence. "It may be that you have some noxious drugs, or medicines, in your possession. If so, destroy them!"

"Fear nothing, my lord," she replied. "The poisons I

use are not confected in the ordinary manner. This small phial, which I keep concealed in my breast, was given me by an Italian, and a few drops of it are sufficient for the purpose, as you have seen. Methinks I have earned my reward."

"You have," replied Clarence, shuddering. "Here are the thousand golden crowns I promised you," he added, giving her a bag of money. "I would counsel your immediate departure, but that flight would excite suspicion."

"I will remain until after the duchess's funeral," said Ankaret. "Till then, I will leave this money with your grace. If search be made, so large a sum must not be found upon me."

"You are right," rejoined Clarence, as he took back the bag.

Scarcely were the words uttered, than an usher entered, and stated that an officer from the king was without, and desired to speak with the duke.

"Is he alone?" asked Clarence, vainly endeavoring to conceal his uneasiness.

"No, my lord; he has a guard with him," replied the usher.

"Admit him!" said the duke.

Accordingly, the officer was introduced.

Bowing respectfully to the duke, he said:

"My duty compels me to intrude upon your grace. I hold a warrant from his majesty for the arrest of Ankaret Twynhyo, one of your grace's female servants."

"On what charge?" demanded the duke, haughtily.

"On a most serious charge!" replied the officer.

"Give it a name, sir?" cried Clarence.

"She is suspected of having poisoned the duchess, my lord," replied the officer. "Her grace, I am told, has just departed this life."

"But she has died from natural causes—not by poison," said the duke. "Ankaret is totally innocent of the heinous crime imputed to her."

"I trust, my lord, she may be able to establish her innocence," rejoined the officer. "But the king believes her guilty."

"He can have no proof of her guilt," said the duke.

"Pardon me, my lord; his majesty has proof under her own handwriting."

"That cannot be," cried Ankaret. "I have committed no offence. I have written nothing to criminate myself."

Then throwing herself at the duke's feet, she exclaimed, "Your grace will not deliver me to certain destruction."

"I cannot protect you," said Clarence. "But you have nothing to fear."

"Yes; I have the torture to fear!" she replied, springing to her feet; "and I will never endure it! I will rather die here!"

And, placing the phial to her lips, she emptied its contents.

"What have you done, miserable woman?" cried the officer, astounded.

"Escaped the rack!" she replied. "Now you may take me with you, if you will. But you cannot bring me before the king. I defy you!" she added, with a fearful laugh.

"Have you naught to declare before you die, woman?" said the officer, noticing an appalling change in her countenance. "This act proves your guilt. But were you instigated to the dreadful deed?"

Clarence awaited her reply in terror, fearing she would accuse him.

"I confess that I poisoned the duchess," she said.

"Had you an accomplice?" demanded the officer. "Answer, as you will answer to the Supreme Judge, before whom you will presently appear."

She made an effort to answer, but the quick poison had already done its work, and she fell dead into the arms of the officer.

"Saved!" mentally ejaculated Clarence.

*CHAPTER V**THE CHASE OF THE MILK-WHITE HART IN WARGRAVE
PARK*

In those days, when so many strange and terrible events occurred, the death of the unfortunate Duchess of Clarence was soon forgotten; and though the strongest suspicion attached to the duke, Ankaret's dying statement, as reported by the officer, served to clear him from all participation in the crime.

But the king had judged correctly. The duchess had not been laid a month within the tomb, when Clarence, fearful of having the great prize snatched from him if he delayed longer, solicited the hand of Mary of Burgundy, and his suit being supported by the mother-in-law of the young heiress, who was likewise his own sister, and devoted to his interests, he would probably have succeeded, but for the determined opposition of Edward.

With such an accession of power as would have been afforded him by this alliance with the heiress of Burgundy, the ambitious duke would have become far more powerful than his royal brother desired, and Edward would not therefore allow the marriage to take place.

Clarence's rage at this grievous disappointment knew no bounds, and, carried away by passion, he was indiscreet enough to threaten vengeance against the king. These menaces were reported to Edward, and the duke's ruin was resolved upon. But a pretext must be afforded for his destruction, and he was allowed to withdraw from court, and retire to Ludlow Castle, where he occupied himself in planning an insurrection.

Edward was quite aware of his schemes, for he had spies in the duke's household; but he gave himself no concern about him, and abided his time.

Among the duke's confidants, and known to be privy to his schemes, was Sir Thomas Burdett, owner of Wargrave, a large park adjoining Windsor Forest, and well stocked with deer.

By this time, Edward, though he still feasted too frequently, had resumed his former active habits, and spent the greater part of each day in hunting, hawking, and other sports. On such occasions he was generally accompanied by Jane, who was an admirable equestrian, and despite her slight frame, could stand a great deal of fatigue.

One day he announced his intention of hunting in Wargrave Park, and set out betimes from Windsor, as the place was somewhat distant. He was accompanied by a large and splendid party, among whom were the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Hastings, and other nobles; but no other lady was with him, except Jane.

Edward seemed rather preoccupied as he rode through the forest, and it is certain he was not thinking wholly of the chase; but whatever grave matter engrossed his thoughts, he did not mention it to Jane, though he now and then exchanged a serious word with Buckingham and Hastings.

Sir Thomas Burdett, in whose park he was about to hunt, was a man of fierce and ungovernable temper, and had been engaged in many private quarrels. He had fought at the battle of Barnet, under the Earl of Warwick; but his estates were saved from confiscation by Clarence, to whom he owed a large debt of gratitude, and was anxious to repay it.

Wargrave Park, as already intimated, was well stocked with deer, and Sir Thomas, being a great hunter, cared not how many stags he killed—the more the merrier; but amid the herds there was a milk-white hart that he loved, and would never allow to be chased.

So tame was the beautiful animal, that it would come to

feed out of Sir Thomas's hand, and was generally seen beneath the oaks in front of the mansion.

As a safeguard, and to show that it belonged to him, he hung a chain of gold round its neck, and the hart seemed proud of the decoration.

This gentle creature, never hitherto disturbed by huntsmen, Edward resolved to kill, his object being to excite the anger of its owner. Had Jane been aware of the king's design, she would have striven to dissuade him from it, and would certainly not have accompanied him.

When Edward entered Wargrave Park, Sir Thomas Burdett, wholly unsuspecting of his purpose, came forth, and placed all his deer at his majesty's disposition, promising him excellent sport.

"You have a milk-white hart, I understand, Sir Thomas?" remarked Edward.

The knight replied in the affirmative, and pointed out the animal beneath the trees.

Thereupon, the king rode with Jane towards the spot, followed by the huntsmen and hounds. Long before their approach, the whole herd took to flight, except the gentle hart, which lifted up its noble head, and looked at them unconcernedly.

"Oh! how much I should like to have that lovely creature!" cried Jane. "But Sir Thomas will never consent to part with it."

"He must part with it!" remarked Edward, significantly.

"Ah! here it comes!" exclaimed Jane, as the stag tripped forward to meet them.

But as it got within half a bowshot of the party, it stopped. Something had alarmed it.

After gazing for a moment, as she thought, wistfully, at Jane, the stag dashed off.

At a sign from the king, the horns were blown, and the hounds unleashed, and the whole party started in pursuit.

Unable to restrain her steed, Jane was obliged to keep near the king.

“You do not mean to kill that stag, my liege?” she cried. “’Twere a cruel deed!”

Edward made no reply, but his looks proclaimed that such was his intent.

Jane rode on, occasionally renewing her entreaties, but the king continued obdurate.

Never before had such a chase been seen, either in Wargrave Park or Windsor Forest, and those who witnessed it were wonderstruck at the swiftness of the beautiful stag, as it speeded along the glades, and passed through the groves.

Jane thought it would escape, but on reaching the limits of the park, it turned, and after rapidly retracing its course, made for the mansion, hoping to find refuge with its master.

But before the terrified animal could reach this place of safety, it was pulled down by the hounds, and killed by Edward's own hand.

Taking the chain from the hart's neck, the king gave it to Jane, and bade her wear it.

“I like not the gift, my liege,” she said, perceiving that the chain was sprinkled with blood. “I fear it will bring me ill luck.”

“Nay, by my faith, you shall wear it,” said Edward. “It will remind you of this merry chase.”

Placing the bugle to his lips, he winded a mort.

Next moment, the whole party came up, and gathered round the slaughtered stag.

At the same time Sir Thomas Burdett reached the spot, almost distraught with grief and rage.

Looking down at the poor beast, he exclaimed, in the bitterness of his heart:

“Must thou be the victim of his savage sport? Would that thy horns were plunged deep in his body who slew thee!”

Scarcely had the imprudent words escaped him, than he was seized by a couple of huntsmen.

“Ha, traitor! ha, villain!” exclaimed Edward, furiously. “Thy tongue ought to be plucked out for those treasonable words!”

“Pardon him, I implore you, my liege,” interposed Jane. “Ask grace of the king, Sir Thomas,” she added to the knight, “and he will grant it to you.”

“Let him take my life, if he will,” rejoined Burdett, sternly. “I doubt not he seeks it, or he would not have done me this grievous wrong.”

“Peace, sir,” said Jane. “You aggravate your offence. Humble yourself, and I will intercede for you.”

“I want not your intercession. I would not owe my life to you!” cried Sir Thomas, scornfully.

“Thou art a vile traitor, and shalt die!” cried Edward, as he sprang into the saddle.

“I go to my doom,” said Burdett. “But mark me, sire! This deed will not be unavenged!”

“Ha! say’st thou?” cried Edward, hoping to draw something further from him. “Who will avenge thee?”

“Heaven!” replied the knight. “Heaven will avenge me!”

Then, turning to the men who held him, he said:

“A moment, and I will go with you.”

And as they released him, he knelt down beside the hart, and patted its forehead gently, muttering the while:

“They have killed thee, my poor beast, that they might kill thy master!”

After taking this farewell of his favorite, which moved Jane greatly, if it moved no one else, he arose, and delivered himself to his captors.

Meantime, the king had given orders that he should be taken to his own house, being strictly guarded the while, and then brought as a prisoner to Windsor Castle.

Thus ended the chase of the milk-white hart in Wargrave Park ; and it was long afterwards remembered, because divers calamities were traced to it.

As Jane rode back through the forest, she was much dispirited, and Edward vainly endeavored to cheer her.

That night she dreamed that the chase was renewed, but it ended differently. Hotly pursued, the hart stood at bay, and gored the king dangerously with its horns.

As to the unhappy knight, he was first taken to Windsor Castle, as had been enjoined, and was then arraigned before the judges, charged with high treason, condemned to death, and executed within two days.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE QUARREL BETWEEN THE KING AND CLARENCE, AND HOW THE DUKE WAS ARRESTED

The Duke of Clarence was at Ludlow Castle when this tragical event occurred, and so incensed was he when he heard the particulars of his adherent's execution, that he set out at once for Windsor to demand an explanation of the king.

Nor had his anger abated by the time of his arrival at the castle. He sought an immediate audience of the king, and obtained it.

Edward was alone in his cabinet when Clarence was ushered into his presence. Perceiving at once, from his brother's looks and deportment, that he was scarcely able to control himself, he resolved to take advantage of any indiscretion on the duke's part.

“Your majesty will not doubt what has brought me

hither," said Clarence, in a haughty tone. "I have come to demand from you an account of the death of my faithful adherent, Sir Thomas Burdett!"

"'Tis plain you have not heard what has happened, brother," replied the king. "Your adherent has been found guilty of high treason."

"And has been put to death, because he uttered a few hasty words when you killed his favorite deer!" said Clarence. "No tyrant could have acted with greater severity!"

"It may be well you should put some guard on your own speech, brother," rejoined Edward, sternly. "Sir Thomas Burdett was justly executed. 'Twas proved at his trial, by his servants, that he practised magic arts—that he fashioned small leaden images of ourself and the princes, our sons, and melted them, praying we might consume in like manner; and that he calculated our nativity, predicting death on a certain day. For these practices—not altogether for his treasonable speech—was he condemned to die."

"I do not believe in these idle charges," cried Clarence. "The servants who accused him of sorcery were suborned. Sir Thomas was loyal and true."

"In vowing fidelity to you, brother, he did not reserve his allegiance to me," rejoined Edward.

"The accusations are false, I repeat," cried Clarence. "His trial was a mere mockery, for his destruction was resolved upon. This is shown by the haste with which the affair was conducted."

"Dare you say this to me?" cried Edward.

"Ay; and I dare tell you that you have acted unwisely as well as unjustly in this hasty procedure, and that you may have reason to regret what you have done."

"You threaten, methinks, brother!" remarked the king.

"This deadly blow has been aimed against me," said Clarence, giving way to ungovernable passion. "These false charges have been brought against Burdett in order that they

may prejudice me, but I repel them with scorn and indignation. Is this your gratitude? To me you owe your re-establishment on the throne, when you had been driven from it. Had I not aided you, Warwick would inevitably have proved the victor at Barnet."

"You forget that I should never have had to fight for my kingdom but for your treachery and desertion," rejoined Edward. "In pardoning the rebellion for which you ought to have lost your head, I did enough. But I have bestowed favors without end upon you."

"You have latterly deprived me of half my possessions by the intolerable act of resumption," said Clarence. "Moreover, you have thwarted my marriage with Mary of Burgundy, which the duchess, our sister, had fully arranged. Think you I will tamely submit to such a wrong?"

"I know not—and care not," rejoined Edward, in a tone of indifference.

"I am treated as if I have no title to the crown," cried Clarence; "whereas, my title is superior to your own. There cannot be a doubt that the Duke of York was my father."

"What would you insinuate?" said Edward, fiercely.

"Methinks the inference is sufficiently clear," said Clarence.

"Retract what thou hast said; or, by Saint Mark, I will strike thee dead at my feet," cried Edward, starting up and drawing his dagger.

Clarence did not blench, but prepared to defend himself.

What might have been the end of this unnatural quarrel, it boots not to consider, but fortunately at this moment Jane entered the cabinet, and, seeing how matters stood, she rushed forward and placed herself between them.

"Hold, my liege!" she exclaimed. "Forget not that the Duke of Clarence is your brother!"

"He has dared to defame his own mother, and merits

death at my hand!" said Edward. "But I will not sully my steel with his blood. I will leave him to the executioner."

And he sheathed his dagger.

"The duke cannot mean what he has said, my liege," cried Jane. "He has spoken in anger. Let him depart, I pray you!"

"No," replied Edward. "He stirs not hence, save to the Tower. I have forgiven him many injuries; but it would be worse than weakness to forgive him now. His anger has caused him to betray the project he has formed. 'Tis no less than to disinherit me and my issue."

"Since you have discovered the design, my liege, 'tis innocuous," said Jane. "Clemency may excite better feelings in his breast. Throw yourself at the king's feet, my lord, and, perchance, he may vouchsafe you a pardon."

"Never!" cried Clarence. "Let him take my life, if he will. I have been goaded to madness by great wrongs, and no wonder I have become desperate."

"You hear, my liege," cried Jane. "His highness owns he has been in fault."

"If he sincerely repents, and promises not to offend again, I may be induced to forgive him," said Edward, somewhat mollified. "But let him bend his proud neck."

"Ask not too much, my liege," implored Jane. "Suffer him to depart."

"Bid him return forthwith," said Edward, "and shut himself up in Ludlow Castle, till I grant him liberty. Any infraction of my orders will be visited with death."

"I need not repeat his majesty's commands to your highness," said Jane. "But I would exhort you to make all haste you can to Ludlow Castle."

"I will take refuge there as in a sanctuary," said Clarence.

"But you will find it no sanctuary if you again offend, brother," said Edward, sternly. "Fare you well!"

Clarence made no response; but, with a haughty reverence, departed.

For some time after he was gone, Edward maintained a moody silence, and Jane did not venture to address him. At length he spoke.

"Clarence's nature is wholly faithless," he said. "To me he has always been false, and he was equally false to Warwick. He will now commence fresh plots against me."

"Let us hope not, my liege," said Jane. "At all events, I am glad you pardoned him."

"I have only pardoned him conditionally," rejoined the king.

Shortly afterwards, Lord Hastings entered the cabinet, looking very much disturbed.

"I have been sorely tempted to disobey your majesty's commands, and detain the Duke of Clarence," he said. "We have abundant proofs that he has been conspiring against you, and if not checked, he is certain to breed confusion, and perhaps cause another insurrection."

"Such is my own opinion," said Edward. "But Mistress Shore has pleaded for him, and I have yielded to her entreaties."

"He is so actively mischievous, that he ought not to be at large, my liege," said Hastings.

"I have ordered him to return at once to Ludlow Castle, and keep close there," rejoined Edward.

"But you neglected to send a guard with him, my liege," said Hastings. "He has gone to Shene."

"To Shene!" cried Edward. "Follow him thither at once with a dozen men-at-arms. Arrest him, and clap him in the Tower. There he will be quiet, and may plot at his ease, without danger to me."

"My liege!" cried Jane.

"You sue in vain," rejoined Edward. "I am deaf to your entreaties. About the business at once, my lord!"

“Give me the warrant for the duke’s arrest, my liege,” said Hastings, “and he shall be lodged within the Tower before night.”

This was done, and Hastings set out at once for Shene Palace, where he found the duke, and arrested him.

CHAPTER VII

HOW CLARENCE WAS IMPRISONED IN THE BOWYER’S TOWER

Clarence manifested great displeasure at what he termed the king’s violation of faith, but he did not offer any resistance, and, his attendants being dismissed, he was conveyed, by water, to the Tower, and placed in a prison-lodging at the rear of the donjon.

The fortification wherein the Duke of Clarence was confined, and which, from this circumstance, has acquired a peculiarly gloomy celebrity, is situated in an angle at the north of the ancient wall surrounding the inner ward.

The structure is of great strength, and originally consisted of two stories, approached by a circular stone staircase. The basement floor, in which the duke was confined, and which exactly corresponded with the upper room, now demolished, was vaulted and groined, and contained three deep recesses, contrived in the thickness of the walls, and each terminated by a narrow, grated embrasure. Near the ponderous door there was a small cell, likewise formed in the substance of the wall.

The fortification derived its name, as will be readily conjectured, from having been originally the residence of the master-bowyer, one of the officers of the Tower; but even at

the date of our story, it had long been used as a place of confinement for state prisoners.

In this gloomy prison the ambitious and luxurious Clarence was left to fret.

For a short time he persuaded himself that his royal brother, whom he had so deeply injured, but who had so often forgiven him, would relent and set him free. But his expectation vanished as he reflected upon what he had done, and blamed his own imprudence. He well knew he had a bitter enemy in the queen, and that she would harden the king's heart against him. Besides, he had many other powerful enemies bent upon his destruction, while his friends were unable to serve him.

He could think of no other person who would act as a mediator between him and the king except Jane, and hearing she was at Westminster, he contrived to send a message to her. But before she could respond to his appeal, he had a visit from his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, which entirely altered his frame of mind.

Unaware that the deeply dissembling Gloucester secretly aspired to the throne, and, consequently, desired the removal of every obstacle in his way, Clarence confided in him, and when he visited him in his prison, laid bare his secret heart to him.

"'Tis certain I have deeply offended the king, our brother, by seeking to disinherit him and his children," he said; "but I do not despair of obtaining a pardon, through the instrumentality of Mistress Shore."

"Do not apply to her, brother," replied the wily Gloucester. "Mistress Shore will do you more harm than good. That she will undertake your cause I nothing doubt. But her previous interference in your behalf displeased the king, and if she troubles him again, all my exertions will be ineffectual. I hope to find a better advocate for you than Mistress Shore."

“Impossible! She has far more influence with Edward than anyone else, and can counteract the queen’s animosity, which I have most reason to dread.”

“What if I secure the queen herself, brother?” said Gloucester. “Already I have spoken with her majesty, who shows a kindly disposition towards you. Upon that feeling I will work till I have enlisted her sympathies in your behalf, and then you are safe, for the king will not refuse her if she solicits your pardon. But if Mistress Shore steps in beforehand, and torments Edward with importunities, even the queen will fail.”

“I should have thought the queen more likely to inflame Edward against me than to pacify him.”

“You have to thank me for this favorable change in her sentiments,” said Gloucester. “But the utmost caution must be observed, or her enmity may again be aroused. Have naught to do with Mistress Shore, brother—that is my counsel.”

“But I have besought Mistress Shore to come to me,” said Clarence.

“’Tis well you told me this, or you had spoiled all,” said Gloucester. “Forbid her to speak to the king—peremptorily forbid her! Heed not giving the minion offence. Dismiss her!”

“By so doing, I shall make her my enemy.”

“No matter. You must choose between her and the queen. But I must now leave you.”

“Your discourse has cheered me greatly, brother,” said Clarence. “Come again soon, I pray you.”

“I must not come too often,” replied Gloucester. “But I have brought you something that will cheer you better than my society. Something to gladden your heart, brother.”

“What is it? A book? A lute?” cried Clarence.

Just then, a noise was heard outside.

“Someone comes,” cried Gloucester. “It may be Mis-

tress Shore. I would not meet her. You shall hear from me ere long. Farewell !”

But before he could depart the door was opened by Dighton, the gaoler, and Jane entered the room, attended by Malbouche.

Bowing haughtily to her, Gloucester was about to pass forth, when the jester said to him :

“ I expected to find your highness here.”

“ How so, knave ?” cried the duke, surprised.

“ Because I fancied you would like to change places with the duke, your brother,” replied Malbouche, with a grin.

“ Go to,” cried Gloucester. “ Thou art a meddling fool !” And he quitted the chamber in some confusion.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW A BUTT OF MALMSEY WAS SENT TO CLARENCE BY THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

“ I thank you, madame, for this kindly visit,” said Clarence. “ Your sympathy for the unfortunate proves the goodness of your heart.”

“ I fear I can render you little assistance, my lord,” said Jane. “ The king still continues violently incensed. 'Tis in vain I endeavor to exculpate you. He will not listen to me. Your enemies are too powerful.”

“ One of the worst has just gone forth,” remarked Malbouche.

“ My brother ! The Duke of Gloucester ! I cannot believe it,” cried Clarence.

“ 'Tis true,” said the jester. “ He is leagued with the queen against your highness.”

"Thou art mistaken," exclaimed the duke. "He asserted, even now, that the queen is friendly to me."

"Alas! my lord, it is not so," said Jane. "I fear you have but one friend to plead your cause with the king."

"And Gloucester would have me alienate that friend!" cried Clarence. "Oh, madame, how much I owe you! Without you I were lost."

"I will save you, my lord, if I can," said Jane. "I will beg your life on my bended knees. But I dare not promise that my prayer will be granted."

"Yes, yes; it will!" cried Clarence, eagerly. "The king can refuse you nothing. If he spares me, he may rely on my fidelity and devotion for the future. No more plots, no more insurrections. Let him take back all my possessions. I shall be content with bare life."

"Should your highness be pardoned, as I trust you may be," said Jane, "I am well assured the king will act generously. Your possessions will not be forfeited."

"You give me some hopes, then?" cried Clarence.

"If your enemies prove not too powerful, my lord, I trust I shall prevail," said Jane.

Here an interruption was offered by the entrance of Sir Robert Brakenbury, the lieutenant of the Tower.

"His grace the Duke of Gloucester hath sent your highness a butt of the choicest malmsey," said Brakenbury. "The men are now bringing it hither."

"I am half inclined to return the gift," cried the duke.

"Nay, my lord, I pray you do not," said the lieutenant. "You will offend his grace, and moreover, the wine will cheer you, and enable you to bear your confinement. Ha! here it comes."

And as he spoke, a huge cask was pushed into the room—not without some difficulty—by three stout porters.

"'Twill incommode your highness if it stand here!" said

Brakenbury. "Place it in yonder recess," he added, to the porters.

And the men, having fulfilled their task, departed.

"Your highness can now drown your cares!" cried Malbouche, as he gazed at the butt, which completely blocked up the embrasure.

"I can drown myself whenever I am so minded!" rejoined Clarence.

The hint did not seem lost on Brakenbury, to judge from the singular expression of his countenance.

"Will it please your highness to taste the wine?" he added. "If so, I will have the cask broached forthwith."

"Not now, Sir Robert," rejoined Clarence.

"Beshrew me, if I would drink a drop of it," said Malbouche.

"If your highness has any fear, I will act as your taster," observed Brakenbury.

"Thank you, good Sir Robert," said Clarence. "If I thought the wine would procure me oblivion, I would drink deeply of it."

"Avoid it, my lord, if you are wise," remarked Jane, in a low, significant tone.

Then, turning to the lieutenant, she added, "I will pray you conduct me to the gate, Sir Robert."

Brakenbury bowed in assent, and immediately afterwards the party quitted the prison, and Clarence was left alone to his reflections.

CHAPTER IX

*HOW CLARENCE WAS TRIED FOR HIGH TREASON AND
CONDEMNED TO DEATH*

Within a week from this date, Clarence was placed at the bar of the House of Lords, charged with high treason, the Duke of Buckingham being appointed high steward for the occasion.

The prosecution being conducted by the king in person, it was evident from the first that the prisoner would be found guilty. So overpowered, indeed, were the nobles by Edward's vehemence and passion, that not a single voice was raised in the duke's favor.

Yet Clarence defended himself courageously and well, and produced a strong impression upon his auditors. Energetically denying the accusations brought against him by the king, he denounced the queen and the Duke of Gloucester as his mortal enemies, and the secret contrivers of this scheme for his destruction.

His defence, however, as had been foreseen, proved unavailing, and when he gazed around at the noble assemblage at the close of his eloquent address, all looks were averted from him. He was found guilty, condemned to death, and sentence pronounced upon him by the Duke of Buckingham.

But Edward objected to a public execution, and it was thought, from the reluctance thus manifested by the king, that he would pardon his unfortunate brother.

Perhaps the duke himself entertained some such expectation. The firmness he had displayed throughout the trial never deserted him, and he heard his sentence with composure.

With a haughty step he marched from Westminster Hall to the barge that was waiting to convey him back to the Tower, and was wholly unmoved by the cries of the populace.

But when he was alone in his prison-chamber in the Bowyer's Tower, his courage deserted him. He then felt how vain it was to struggle against his enemies.

Not one of those whom he had favored, and helped to raise to greatness, had spoken in arrest of judgment—not one would plead for him—while some, he felt sure, would harden the king's heart against him.

His sole hope rested upon Jane. If anyone could save him, she could. Convinced of this, he sent for Sir Robert Brakenbury, who, he thought, had a friendly feeling towards him, and besought him to despatch a messenger to her with a letter which he had prepared, and the lieutenant complied with the request.

Instead of writing an answer, Jane came in person, accompanied, as before, by Malbouche. The expression of her countenance was calculated to revive the duke's hopes. Brakenbury was present at the interview.

"I had not waited for your letter, my lord," she said, "to implore a remission of your sentence from the king, and I trust your life will be spared. You will be banished for a time to Ireland——"

"That is nothing!" cried Clarence, joyfully. "I can endure a long exile with patience, but I cannot meet death with the fortitude I expected. Oh, how much I owe you, madame!"

"I deem it right to inform your highness," said Jane, "that the Duke of Gloucester has been striving to obtain a warrant for your secret execution; but I do not think, after my representations to his majesty, that he will succeed."

"Heaven confound the fratricide and murderer! He is worse than Cain!" exclaimed Clarence, furiously. "He

seeks to slay me, that he may mount the throne himself. Is it possible Edward does not perceive his aim?"

"His majesty can only see one thing at a time, your highness," remarked Malbouche.

"He will find out his mistake when it is too late," said Clarence. "The queen, too, will regret her misplaced confidence in the dissembling villain."

"Send back his butt of malmsey, my lord," said Malbouche. "'Tis still here, I see."

"Ay, and the sight of it disturbs me!" cried Clarence. "I have not tasted, nor will I taste, the contents of the cask. Take it hence, I pray you, Sir Robert!"

"Heed not this fool's advice, my lord!" said Brakenbury. "You will be glad of the wine anon."

"'Tis no fool's advice, as his highness will find," said the jester.

"Well, to-morrow the cask shall be removed, if his highness desires it," rejoined Brakenbury.

"To-morrow!" ejaculated Malbouche. "Who knows what may happen before to-morrow?"

"Dost think the butt will be emptied, knave?" said the lieutenant.

"I know not what to think," rejoined the jester. "But strange qualms come o'er me when I look at it."

"I must now take leave of your highness," said Jane. "I shall continue to watch over your safety."

"I like not to say farewell forever, madame," rejoined the duke, in a despondent tone. "But I have a foreboding we shall never meet again in this world."

"Dismiss the thought," said Jane. "Your enemies shall not triumph over you if I can prevent them."

"Beware of yonder cask," said Malbouche. "That is my parting counsel to your highness."

Jane and the others then went forth, and the duke was once more left to his melancholy reflections.

Before Jane and the lieutenant reached the Tower stairs, near which the barge was moored, they encountered Sir William Catesby, the Duke of Gloucester's chief confidant.

He had just landed from a covered boat, and was accompanied by two stalwart but repulsive-looking attendants.

To Jane, Catesby's appearance at this juncture seemed ominous of ill; and Brakenbury's countenance grew sombre as he noticed his ill-omened attendants. Malbouche absolutely shuddered at the sight of them.

"Have you any business with me, Sir William?" inquired the lieutenant, as Catesby came up.

"Very important business, Sir Robert," replied the other, in accents distinctly heard by Jane and her companion. "I bring you a warrant for the immediate execution of the Duke of Clarence. 'Tis the king's pleasure that the execution be done in secret. More anon."

With this, he delivered the warrant to Brakenbury, who bowed as he received it.

At the same moment, an irrepressible cry from Jane attracted the attention of Catesby's sinister attendants, and they both turned their sullen faces towards her.

CHAPTER X

SHOWING IN WHAT MANNER THE DUKE OF CLARENCE WAS PUT TO DEATH

"Though I have a warrant for this secret execution, I like it not," remarked Brakenbury, as he stood with Catesby near the entrance to the lieutenant's lodgings. "It savors of a murder, and I would rather have no hand in it."

"It must appear that the duke has died a natural death,"

rejoined Catesby. "Miles Forrest and Swartmoor, the two men I have brought with me, will do the deed well, and give you no trouble. But since you dislike the business, leave it to me. Give me the keys of the Bowyer's Tower, and order the gaoler not to go there till to-morrow morning."

"Right glad am I to be relieved of a duty so unpleasant," said Brakenbury. "For a mountain of gold I would not have such a crime upon my conscience. If I understand aright, the duke is allowed to choose the manner of his death."

"Even so," replied Catesby. "But methinks 'twere best not to give him the choice. I have my own idea of an easy end, and that I shall now put in practice."

"Would that the matter could be delayed!" exclaimed the compassionate lieutenant.

"That were impolitic. When Louis was consulted by our own king about the imprisonment of the Duke of Clarence, the shrewd French monarch replied, in a verse from Lucan :

'Tolle moras, semper nocuit differe paratis.'

Delay not when you are ready to act. That is my own maxim."

"But the duke is unprepared," said Brakenbury. "He must not be cut off in his sin. I will take his confessor, Father Lambert, to him."

"I object not to the confessor," rejoined Catesby; "but my plan must not be marred."

"Tell me naught of your plan, and then I cannot interfere with it," said the lieutenant. "Enter my lodgings, I pray you, and take Forrest and Swartmoor with you. 'Twere best they should not be seen about. On my return, you shall have the keys of the prison, and all else you may require."

"No need of haste," rejoined Catesby. "Nothing will be done before midnight."

"The deed befits the hour," observed Brakenbury.

He then proceeded towards St. Peter's Chapel in quest of Father Lambert, while Catesby called to his men, and took them into the lieutenant's lodgings.

Clarence was pacing to and fro within his prison-chamber, in a very agitated state of mind, when the door was unlocked, and Brakenbury entered with Father Lambert, who was well known to the duke, and, indeed, acted as his confessor.

Extending his arms over the illustrious prisoner, who bent reverently before him, Father Lambert exclaimed :

"The saints be with you, my son."

Then, regarding him earnestly, he added, "I trust I find you resigned to Heaven's holy will."

"My sufferings are severe, father," replied the duke ; "but I strive to bear them patiently. I thank you for this visit. Your exhortations will greatly comfort me."

"My son," said Father Lambert, solemnly, "I have come to help you to prepare for death."

"Is it so near at hand?" demanded Clarence, reading in the lieutenant's looks a confirmation of the dread announcement.

"Alas! my lord, I can give you no hope," said Brakenbury. "The king is inexorable. Your enemies have prevailed!"

"But when am I to die, and how!" cried Clarence. "How many hours are left me? Shall I behold another day?"

"My lord, I cannot answer the questions you put to me," rejoined Brakenbury. "'Tis certain you have not long to live. 'Twere best, therefore, to employ the little time remaining to you in preparation for eternity. To that end, I will leave Father Lambert with you. He will tarry as long as you list, and I promise you shall not be interrupted. May our Blessed Lord absolve you of all your sins!"

He then went forth, leaving the duke alone with the priest.

Edward IV

After an Original Painting in the Royal Collection





The duke had much to confess, for nearly three hours had elapsed ere Father Lambert rejoined the lieutenant, who was waiting for him at the foot of the stone staircase.

"How left you his highness, holy father?" inquired Brakenbury, in a tone of deep solicitude.

"Truly and heartily contrite," replied the priest. "I have given him full absolution."

Greatly comforted by the prayers and exhortations of his ghostly counsellor, Clarence became more composed.

When night came on, he did not seek his couch, but while seated in a chair, sank into a profound slumber, from which he was aroused by the opening of the door.

The foremost of those who entered bore a lamp, that served to dispel the gloom, and showed him three persons, whose appearance filled him with dismay.

Springing to his feet, he stood gazing at them in speechless terror. Their proceedings surprised him. He who bore the lamp set it down, while his ruffianly attendants placed a flagon and some silver goblets they had brought with them on a little oak table that stood in the centre of the room.

"Is it thou, Catesby?" demanded the duke, at length. "What brings thee here at this untimely hour?"

"I am come to have a carouse with your highness," replied the other.

"Thou mockest me! Knowest thou not I am condemned to death?"

"'Tis in the hope of cheering your last moments that I have thus intruded upon your highness," rejoined Catesby. "I have been informed by his Grace of Gloucester that your highness is well supplied with wine. Nay, by the mass! I descry a butt of Malmsey in yonder recess. We shall scarce finish it at a sitting; but let us make the attempt."

"No more wine shall pass my lips," said the duke; "but drink as much as you will, and let your men help you!"

"I thank your highness for the offer," rejoined Catesby.

“Knock off the lid of the cask, and fill the flagon,” he added, to his attendants.

As the order was obeyed, the powerful odor of the wine pervaded the chamber, and slightly assailed the duke's brain.

Filling a goblet to the brim, Catesby emptied it at a draught.

“By the mass! 'tis a rare wine!” he cried. “His highness said you might taste it,” he added, filling a cup for each of his attendants.

“By Saint Dominick, I never drank such wine!” cried Miles Forrest. “It gladdens the heart.”

“A cup of it would revive me were I at the last gasp!” exclaimed Swartmoor.

“You hear what they say, my lord!” cried Catesby, filling another goblet. “By Heaven! 'tis the true *elixir vitæ*!—a sovereign remedy against earthly ills.”

“Ay, that I'll warrant it!” cried Miles Forrest. “Would my cup might be replenished!”

“And mine!” cried Swartmoor.

“Stint them not, I command you!” said the duke to Catesby. “Since the wine pleases you, my good fellows, drink of it lustily.”

“We should enjoy it far more an' your highness would bear us company,” said Miles Forrest.

“Ay, marry, should we!” cried Swartmoor.

“Better wine was never drunk, that I maintain!” cried Catesby. “Were I to yield to my own inclinations, I should half empty yon cask.”

“And we could empty the other half,” said his attendants, laughing.

“Set about the task,” cried Clarence.

“But your highness must help us,” said Catesby.

“I am prevented by a promise given to Father Lambert,” replied Clarence. “When the wine was brought here, the

good priest cautioned me against it, declaring that a draught of it would be fatal to me, and I promised not to touch it."

"The wine cannot be wholesome to us, and noxious to others," said Catesby. "But, be it what it may, I am resolved your highness shall taste it."

"You will not dare to use force, sir," cried Clarence, alarmed by his tone and manner, as well as by the altered deportment of the two ruffians. "I will resist to the death!"

"Resistance will be idle, my lord," said Catesby. "Take him to the cask," he added to his myrmidons. "If he will not drink, plunge his head into the wine!"

"Off, villains!" cried Clarence, as they approached. "I guess your design. You would drown me."

They replied by a dreadful laugh, and seizing the duke, a terrible struggle commenced.

As they dragged him away, despite his desperate efforts to free himself, the table was upset, and the flagon and goblets rolled to the ground with a hideous clatter.

Catesby did not stay to see the dreadful deed done. Snatching up the lamp, he rushed from the room, and stationed himself outside the door.

While standing there, he heard a terrible splash, followed by half-stifled cries, mingled with imprecations from the murderers. Then all became silent.

Only for a few minutes.

A dreadful sound was next heard of a heavy body thrown on the floor.

Catesby waited no longer.

On re-entering the room, he saw an inert mass lying on the ground.

Beside it stood the two murderers.

The floor was flooded with wine. Wine, also, was streaming from the long locks of the victim, and from the upper part of his rich habiliments, showing how his death had been accomplished.

Next day, it was rumored throughout London that the Duke of Clarence had died suddenly during the night in his prison-chamber in the Tower; and the circumstance seemed so suspicious, that loud murmurs of indignation were everywhere heard.

To allay the popular excitement, the body was exposed at Saint Paul's, that all might behold it. But no one was imposed upon by the exhibition, and the general opinion remained the same—that the duke had not come fairly by his end.

Within the fortress, these doubts were speedily converted into certainty; for the unheard-of manner of the illustrious prisoner's death could not be concealed from the gaolers.

Thenceforth, a superstitious horror brooded over the Bowyer's Tower. Always gloomy, it was now supposed to be haunted. Strange sounds were heard at dead of night in the chamber wherein the ill-fated Clarence had met his mysterious death, and the hapless prisoners who succeeded him were scared almost out of their senses by fearful sights and sounds,

BOOK IV

EDWARD THE FOURTH

CHAPTER I

HOW CAXTON PRESENTED A PSALTER TO THE KING

Deeply, but unavailingly, did Edward reproach himself that he had not pardoned his unhappy brother. Perhaps, if Jane had seen the king after the meeting on the wharf with Catesby and the murderers, whose dark design she suspected, her prayers might have prevailed, but, owing to Gloucester's management, she could not obtain access to his majesty till all was over, and Edward had a weight upon his soul that could not be removed. His brother's blood seemed to cry out for vengeance against him, and he trembled lest the dark offence of which he had been guilty should be visited upon his children.

Only three months previously he had created Edward, his eldest son, still quite a boy, Prince of Wales, and Richard, the youngest, Duke of York. What if both should be taken from him, and his line cut off? He confessed he had provoked Heaven's wrath, and that the punishment would not be greater than he deserved.

To stifle his remorse, he again began to indulge in the excesses that had heretofore proved so baneful to him. But self-indulgence did not lighten his mental anguish, while it increased the bodily infirmities that had stolen upon him of late. His temper became uncertain, and he frequently gave way to violent fits of passion.

This change in his habits, though regarded with much concern by those who loved him, was highly satisfactory to the darkly-designing Gloucester, as it held forth the promise that the life of the royal voluptuary would not be long.

But another passion, besides luxury, had taken possession

of the king, from which he had hitherto been wholly free. Owing to the sums extorted from his subjects under various pretexts, the estates he had confiscated, and the large annual pension he received from Louis XI. he became very rich, and as his treasures increased, he grew covetous.

Hitherto lavish, if not generous, he was now avaricious and grasping. His gifts were rare and no longer princely, and his courtiers complained of his excessive parsimony. The engaging qualities that had won for him the regard of the people in his earlier days, and aided him to establish the throne, had disappeared; but he was still affable, and retained his fondness for splendid attire. His unequalled symmetry of person was gone, and his strength enervated by indulgence. Jane had lost none of her influence over him, and exercised it beneficially as ever. The king's new-born avarice troubled her exceedingly, though not on her own account, but she had many suitors whom she desired to serve, and whom she was now obliged to send empty away.

Amongst those who presented themselves, one day, in the ante-chamber of her apartments in the Palace of Westminster, was William Caxton.

This remarkable individual, who was the first to introduce the art of printing into England, was then turned seventy, but was still hale and hearty, and looked as if several years of active and useful life were still left him—as, indeed, they were, for he lived to be eighty-one.

Temperate in his habits, still capable of great mental and bodily exertion, plain in attire, austere in look, and sedate in manner, Caxton presented a striking contrast to the indolent and luxurious Edward, whose strength had been impaired, and whose beauty and personal symmetry had been destroyed by continual excesses.

On the marriage of Margaret of York, Edward's sister, to Charles the Bold, Caxton, who had been engaged in commercial pursuits in Holland and Flanders, was appointed to a

place in the household of the duchess, and, by her command, translated and printed Raoul Lefèvre's "History of Troy."

Shortly afterwards he returned to his own country. Patronized by Lord Rivers, the queen's brother, and protected by the Bishop of Hereford, he established a printing-press in Westminster Abbey. Here was produced his renowned "Game of Chess," which enjoys the distinction of being the first book printed in England. Here, also, were printed many other books, among which were the poems of Chaucer; and the famous printer was still adding to his long list of marvellous works, when he presented himself, on the morning in question, in Jane's ante-chamber.

When Caxton's name was announced by the usher, Jane desired that he might be instantly admitted, and expressing her pleasure at seeing him, she presented him to the king, who was fortunately with her at the time.

Edward was seated in a fauteuil, propped up by cushions, with his foot on a tabouret, conversing with Malbouche, who stood beside him; but he slightly raised himself as Caxton was brought forward, and, kneeling down, proffered him a small book.

"Deign, sire," he said, "to accept this psalter, printed expressly for your own use. I regard it as the best specimen of my art, or I should not presume to offer it to your majesty."

"'Tis beautifully executed," said Edward, taking the psalter from him, and motioning him to rise. "You have achieved wonders, good Master Caxton."

"The art is only in its infancy, my liege," replied the printer, modestly. "Wonders, no doubt, will be achieved by those who come after me."

"Meantime, you have done much," said Jane, to whom the king had handed the book, and who seemed greatly pleased with it. "This great invention," she said, "which

you have so successfully carried out, will be one of the memorable events of his majesty's reign."

"Ay, marry, we have reason to feel proud of you, good Master Caxton," said Edward. "When my sister, the Duchess of Burgundy, wrote to me that you had printed for her Raoul Lefèvre's 'History of Troy,' I did not comprehend that a greater feat had been accomplished than any deed of arms, and that you had conquered a kingdom hitherto unknown. Since then I have watched your progress with much interest, and it has been matter of the highest satisfaction to me that you have chosen our capital, and not a foreign city, as the scene of your important labors. My brother, Lord Rivers, hath often spoken of you in terms of the warmest commendation; and I fully intended, though I have too long neglected to do so, to visit your printing-press in Westminster Abbey."

"Why not go there now, my liege?" cried Jane. "Of all things, I should like to see this wonder-working press!"

"'Twill, indeed, be a great gratification if your majesty will so far honor me," said Caxton, delighted by the proposition; "but I am wholly unprepared."

"No preparation is necessary," said the king. "If the visit be postponed, it may never be made."

"Very true, sire," said Malbouche. "Your majesty constantly forms good resolutions, but rarely keeps them. 'Tis too much trouble,' or 'Another time will be best.' An excuse is never wanting."

"I have had so much fatigue, that I am now glad of repose," said the king.

"I do not wonder at it, my liege," remarked Caxton. "Though, for my own part, nothing wearies so much as idleness. But then I have not the same excuse as your majesty."

"In sooth, I have no excuse," said Edward. "My health suffers from want of exercise, and my physicians counsel me to spend five or six hours each day on horseback."

"And so do I, my liege," observed Jane. "You must, perforce, return to Windsor, and hunt daily in the forest."

"And forego grand banquets for a time" added Malbouche. "I am the best physician."

"Wouldst starve me, knave?" cried Edward, testily.

"No, my liege," replied the jester. "But I would limit your repast to a dozen dishes, and never allow it to exceed twenty. Nor would I suffer you to consume more than three flasks of that good wine of Chalosse, sent you by Louis of France, of which your majesty is so fond."

Caxton could scarce repress a smile.

"Faith, the wine is so good, that I am tempted to drink too much of it!" remarked the king.

"A war with France would prove a certain cure for all your majesty's ailments," said Caxton.

"I must not have recourse to it," rejoined the king. "But let us go see your printing-press."

The party then left the palace by a private door, and proceeded to the Abbey.

CHAPTER II

THE VISIT TO THE CAXTON PRINTING-PRESS

The chamber in which stood the first printing-press established in England was situated at the back of the Abbey near the cloisters, and had once been a chapel, whence originated the designation still applied to a printer's work-room.

In this antique apartment, which was built of stone, and had a groined roof, and pointed windows filled with stained glass, was set up the cumbrous machine that had already wrought so many wonders. Near it were ranged a few

frames of the simplest and most primitive construction, furnished with cases containing the handsome black letter used by Caxton.

On one side was a large oak table, piled high with folios bound in vellum, and some books of smaller size, all being products of the Caxton press.

Behind the table, in a deep recess, stood a desk and stool—the desk being covered with papers, and the stool occupied by a Franciscan friar, who was evidently compiling some historical work from the documents placed before him.

Three apprentices of very sedate deportment, and attired in jerkins of coarse brown serge, were at work, picking out letters from the cases with great deliberation.

An air of extreme quietude pervaded the chamber.

On the entrance of the royal party the apprentices suspended their work, and the monk ceased writing, and withdrew into the depths of the recess. But Jane noticed him, and a feeling of uneasiness, for which she could scarcely account, came over her.

“How tranquil all seems here, good Master Caxton!” remarked Edward, as he looked around. “Yours must be an agreeable occupation since it can be thus conducted.”

“We are as quiet as if we were in a convent, my liege,” replied Caxton. “Nay, many holy men lend me aid. Friar Sylvius, who has left his desk, is compiling a portion of my *Polychronicon*.”

“To what does that work relate?” inquired Jane.

“When completed, ’twill be a chronicle of the chief events of his majesty’s reign,” rejoined Caxton. “Father Sylvius is now preparing a narrative of the recent expedition to France, with an account of the treaty with King Louis.”

On hearing this, Edward expressed much satisfaction, and said he would question the friar anon, and, if need be, give him some information. Caxton then proceeded to explain the process of printing, and, to demonstrate it more clearly,

caused a few lines to be set up, and pulled at the press, addressed to the *Dame de Beauté*. The sheet was respectfully presented by one of the apprentices to Jane, who bestowed a boon upon them.

The books, of which mention has been made as lying on the table, were next examined, and much admired by the king and his companion.

"All these have been printed by me within the last few years," said Caxton, as he displayed them. "This is the 'Sayings of the Philosophers;' this is a translation of Ovid's 'Book of Metamorphoses;' here are the 'Chronicles of England;' here is the 'History of Reynard the Fox;' here is 'Godfrey of Bouilloigne;' this is the 'Pilgrimage of the Soul;' and this is the 'Liber Festivalis.'"

"A goodly collection, in truth, Master Caxton," observed Edward, glancing at the volumes as they were handed to him. "I am well acquainted with two of them, 'Godfrey of Bouilloigne' and 'Reynard the Fox.' Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' I have read in the original Latin, and I hope to profit by the 'Sayings of the Philosophers.' You recommended to me the 'Pilgrimage of the Soul,'" he added, to Jane; "but I have not yet read the work."

"I have studied it carefully," said Jane; "and can pronounce it an excellent treatise. But your majesty has read all Chaucer's Poems, which have likewise been collected by Master Caxton."

"Ay, marry!" rejoined Edward; "I have read them with infinite delectation. But I will now say a word to Father Sylvius. Come with me," he added, to Jane.

Thereupon he entered the recess, at the further end of which stood the friar, with his hood partially drawn over his face. Fancying that the king did not require his attendance, Caxton remained in the chapel.

As the king approached, Father Sylvius bowed reverently, but did not raise his hood, so that Jane could not discover

his features. But her uneasiness increased, and when he spoke, his voice vibrated to the inmost recesses of her breast.

"We learn from Master Caxton that you are writing a chronicle of our reign, holy father," said Edward. "We hope the record will be faithful."

"I have merely undertaken to describe your majesty's expedition to France," replied the friar. "I am so far qualified for the task, in that I was present at the time. My sole regret is, that I have not a battle, like that of Azincourt, to recount."

"You may yet have your wish," rejoined the king. "Our cousin Louis seems inclined to violate the treaty of Picquigny. If he continues to trifle with us in regard to the marriage of the dauphin with our daughter, the Lady Elizabeth, we shall call him to a strict account; and if we again invade France, thou may'st rest assured we will not return without having taken from him two of his duchies."

"Sire," said the Franciscan, in a deep, low voice, "no second invasion will take place!"

"Ha! what mean'st thou?" exclaimed Edward, sharply. "Dost pretend to pry into the future?"

"No, my liege," replied Father Sylvius. "But the opportunity of successfully invading France is gone. You cannot count upon the support of the Flemings, who are now attached to the interests of Louis. Charles the Bold is dead. The Duke of Bretagne is afflicted with an illness that renders him incapable of any great enterprise. Your new allies, the Kings of Spain and Portugal, will not assist you. It follows, therefore, that if you undertake another war with France, it must be alone and unaided—and this you will not do."

"Thou art mistaken, father," cried Edward. "Let Louis provoke me, and he shall feel my wrath—feel it in every vein in his heart. I will strike a blow that he cannot resist."

"That you might do so, my liege, were you strong, as of old, I doubt not," said Father Sylvius. "But you may find,

when you most need them, that your energies are departed. Think not of war, but make your peace with Heaven. It may be," he added, with impressive solemnity, "that you will not have too much time allowed you for repentance."

With difficulty, Edward restrained his wrath, but he contented himself with saying, with forced calmness:

"Know'st thou not that thy talk is treasonable, and touches thy life?"

"That consideration will not deter me from speaking freely, sire," rejoined the Franciscan. "I deem it my duty to warn your majesty that your time may not be long on earth. 'Twere best, therefore, that the interval should be passed in penitence and prayer. Make atonement if you have done wrong or injustice."

"Have I done thee wrong, that thou dar'st address me thus?" demanded Edward.

"The greatest wrong that man can endure," replied the monk. "Thou hast taken my wife from me."

And throwing back his hood, he displayed the features of Alban Shore.

Even Edward recoiled at the sight of the man he had so deeply injured.

"Let us go hence, my liege," said Jane. "His looks terrify me."

Shore was again about to speak, but the king commanded him, in a stern, menacing tone, to be silent.

"I spare thee, though thou dost richly deserve death," said Edward. "But put a bridle henceforth on thy tongue, or no mercy shall be shown thee."

"Sire, give heed to my words," said Shore. "I am not distraught, as you may imagine, nor have I any desire of vengeance. But I warn you that the evil day is at hand. Thou, also, art warned!" he added, to Jane.

"Spare him, my liege! spare him, for my sake!" she

cried, seeing that the king was about to order the imprudent man's arrest.

Though highly incensed, Edward yielded, and went forth with her. Calming himself by a great effort, he spoke with as much composure to Caxton as if nothing had occurred to disturb him, and shortly afterwards quitted the chapel with his attendants.

CHAPTER III

FOX AND GEESE

The court had removed from Westminster to Windsor Castle, and Edward had not been at the latter place many days when intelligence was brought him that the young Duchess Marie of Burgundy, daughter of Charles the Bold, whom Clarence had sought in marriage, but who had bestowed her hand upon Maximilian, Duke of Austria, had been killed by a fall from her horse while hawking.

This sad event disturbed the king greatly, inasmuch as it was likely to lead to important occurrences. The ill-fated duchess, thus suddenly snatched away in the spring of life, left one child, a daughter, then only three and a half years old. Marguerite of Austria, the child in question, was now the greatest heiress of the day; and it was said that when the wily Louis of France heard of the death of the duchess, wholly disregarding his treaty with the King of England, he resolved to affiance the infant duchess to the Dauphin.

This startling piece of news, conveyed by the English ambassadors at the Court of France, was well calculated to alarm Edward; but after reflecting upon it, and consulting with the queen, he thought it improbable, well knowing that Maximil-

ian, the father of the child, would be averse to the alliance ; and he therefore contented himself with instructing his ambassador, the Lord Howard, who was then at Plessis-les-Tours, with Louis, to watch carefully over the cunning king's proceedings, and report them. For his own part, he said, he refused to doubt his good brother's sincerity.

A more impolitic course could not have been adopted. Heavily bribed by Louis, the ambassadors sent their royal master no further information till the secret treaty for the marriage, of which they were perfectly cognizant, had been concluded at Arras, and the little princess was on the way to Paris.

Whatever rumors reached him, Edward disregarded them, and smiled incredulously when warned by some of his faithful councillors against the artifices of Louis.

In a large withdrawing-room, belonging to the queen's apartments in the castle, hung with cloth of gold arras, and otherwise splendidly furnished, were assembled, one afternoon, all the king's children—namely, two young princes and six princesses ; and a more charming collection of young persons, ranging from very tender years to well-nigh sixteen, could not be found.

The queen had brought her royal husband a numerous family, for three were dead. Of the eight left, all were distinguished for grace and good looks, and some of the princesses were exquisitely beautiful. Elizabeth of York, the eldest of Edward's daughters, who was now, as just intimated, in her sixteenth year, possessed great personal charms, though they were scarcely fully developed, and was extremely amiable in disposition. Her own choice had not been consulted in the important marriage arranged for her by the king her father ; but although she had no predilection for the Dauphin, and had not even exchanged a letter with him, she was naturally well pleased with the notion of becoming Queen of France. Eventually, as is well known, she made as

great a match, being wedded to Henry VII. of England ; but this could not be then foreseen, for Richmond was then held captive in Brittany.

The Princess Elizabeth had a slight and graceful figure, and her features were regular, beautifully moulded, and characterized by great sweetness of expression. She was very richly dressed, as, indeed, were all her sisters, even the youngest of them, who was merely a little girl. Her fair tresses were covered by a caul of gold and allowed to stream down her back, while her slender waist was spanned by a magnificent girdle. Her cotehardie was of figured satin, and worn so long as almost to hide her pointed shoes.

The young princesses, her sisters, were all equally richly dressed ; three of them, Cicely, Anne, and Bridget, in kirtles of cloth of gold and silver ; and the two younger, Mary and Catherine, in little gowns of embroidered velvet.

All five were excessively pretty, but perhaps the prettiest of the whole party was the second daughter, Cicely, who bore a marked resemblance to her royal father. She was then promised to the Prince of Scotland, but actually married Lord Wells. The Princess Cicely had lovely features, rich brown tresses, soft blue eyes, and a brilliant complexion.

The Princess Anne resembled her mother, and promised to be quite as beautiful as the queen was in her younger days. She was to have married into the royal house of Austria but became Duchess of Norfolk.

Bridget, who, even as a child, had a meek and devout appearance, became a nun. The Princess Mary ought to have been Queen of Denmark, but died too soon.

Edward would fain have married his youngest daughter, Catherine, to the heir to the throne of Portugal, but fate decreed it otherwise, and gave the fair princess to an English noble, William Courtenay, Earl of Devonshire.

Thus it will be seen that not one of these young princesses married according to their royal father's plans. Perhaps they

were happier in the alliances they formed. We cannot answer that question. Fortunately, the princes, their brothers, could not foresee the dark fate that awaited them.

Edward, Prince of Wales, then nearly thirteen, was graver and more thoughtful than consorted with his years. He was of a studious turn, and not so fond of sports and exercises as his father had been at his age, but he was not allowed to neglect them. His health was somewhat delicate, and this gave a pale hue to his skin, and, perhaps, imparted a slightly melancholy cast to his countenance. He might have divined that his life would not be long. His eyes were large and black, but lacked fire, and had an almost feminine softness; and his cheeks were not so rounded as they should have been, and wanted bloom. His looks were full of sensibility. His limbs were well proportioned, but extremely slender, and he was tall for his age. His dark-brown hair was cut short over the brow, which was paler than his cheek, and bore traces of great delicacy; but long locks hung down at the sides and at the back.

Very different from the Prince of Wales was Richard Duke of York. He was rather more than three years younger than his brother, was full of health and spirit, having a rosy complexion, bright blue eyes, and long, fair locks.

The young duke was never happier than when in the saddle. He was constantly in the tilt-yard, and had a little suit of armor made for him, and a small lance.

On the present occasion he was attired in a white satin doublet, figured with silver, his surcoat being of blue velvet, ornamented with the royal cognizance. His long hose were of white silk, and his shoes of velvet.

Though different in character, as in appearance, the two brothers were strongly attached to each other, and evinced their regard by a most affectionate manner. As they now stood together in the midst of their fair sisters, the Prince of Wales had his arm over the young duke's shoulder.

In another part of the room three or four middle-aged dames, who acted as governesses to the young princesses, were seated at a table playing at *marreaux*—a game in which little ivory balls were placed in the holes of a board—with the two tutors of the young princes. The pages in attendance were amusing themselves with small nine-pins—then called *clokeys*, but they had retired into the deep embrasure of a window, and left their charges to themselves. Other attendants in the royal livery were collected at the lower end of the room.

“Madame la Dauphine,” said the Prince of Wales to his eldest sister, “I suppose you will soon set out for France, to conclude your marriage with the Dauphin? I hear that the Sire de Beaujeu, with his wife and a brilliant company, are to be sent to meet you at Calais, and conduct you to Paris, where you will have a magnificent reception.”

“You know more than I do,” replied the Princess Elizabeth. “I have heard nothing about it. But I believe that a messenger from our ambassador, the Lord Howard, is expected to-day. Then, no doubt, I shall learn my fate.”

“I wish you would take me with you, Madame la Dauphine,” cried the Duke of York. “I should so much like to see Paris. I am told the *fêtes* will be splendid—far finer than any we have in London.”

“Oh! take us all with you, dear Madame la Dauphine!” cried several small voices, delightedly. “We can go as *demoiselles d’honneur*.”

“You must ask the queen, and not me,” replied the Princess Elizabeth. “If she consents, I shall be delighted to take you.”

“I have already petitioned her majesty,” said the Princess Cicely; “and though I almost went down on my knees, she had the cruelty to refuse me.”

“Oh, dear! then there is little chance for us!” cried the Princesses Anne and Mary.

“You forget you are both engaged to be married,” remarked the Prince of Wales. “What would the King of Denmark say to you, Mary?”

“I don’t care for the King of Denmark!” replied the little princess. “I have never seen him!”

“I have never seen the Dauphin,” observed the Princess Elizabeth. “Yet I would not do anything to displease him.”

“None of us have seen our intended husbands,” said Cicely. “Nor shall we be allowed to do so till our turn comes. I have no wish to visit Edinburgh, where my sweet prince dwells, but I have a very great desire to go to Paris.”

“I thought you were frightened of King Louis?” said the Duke of York.

“So I am; dreadfully frightened of him,” rejoined Cicely. “But he won’t be at the Louvre. He never leaves Plessisles-Tours. I wouldn’t go there for the world. They say all the habitations near the château are pulled down and the trees hung with dead bodies.”

“Those are idle stories,” remarked the Princess Elizabeth. “I make no doubt Plessis is a very pleasant place, and the old king extremely good-natured.”

“Plessis, I am sure, cannot be worse than the Tower,” remarked the Duke of York. “I am always melancholy when I go there. Yet the king, our father, likes the place.”

“He has not been there of late,” observed the Prince of Wales. “I have never liked the Tower since our uncle Clarence died there in that mysterious manner.”

“Yes, that was a sad thing!” said the Duke of York. Then lowering his voice he added, “I wish it had been our uncle Gloucester, instead.”

“You are an ungrateful boy,” said the Princess Elizabeth, gravely. “Your uncle Gloucester is very fond of you.”

“His love is feigned,” said the little duke. “I don’t like him.”

"Neither do I," observed the Prince of Wales. "He is malicious and spiteful."

"You wrong him, Edward," said Elizabeth. "'Tis his manner. He has a good heart."

"He has imposed upon you, sweet sister!" rejoined the Prince of Wales. "I am not to be deceived by him."

The princess made no answer, but, turning to little Bridget, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, she said:

"When I am Queen of France, as I shall be one of these days, Bridget—for the king is growing old—you must come and stay with me at the Louvre."

"That cannot be, Elizabeth!" rejoined the little girl, looking at her fixedly. "I shall be an abbess before you are queen."

"Bridget doesn't know what she is talking about," cried Cicely.

"Yes, I do," replied the little princess. "I mean to be a nun, and in time I shall become an abbess; and when I am an abbess, Elizabeth will come to see me, but I shall not go to her."

This reply made the others look rather grave, but the Prince of Wales called out:

"We have talked quite long enough. Let us amuse ourselves with some game."

"What shall we play at?" cried the Duke of York.

"I am for Prime-Mèrime," said Cicely.

"And I for Queue-leuleu," said Anne.

"I prefer Cache-cache," said Mary.

"My game is Cheval de Bois," said the little Catherine.

"And mine Prince-sans-rire," added the Prince of Wales.

"But what say you, Bridget?"

"I don't mean to play," replied the future abbess, demurely.

"Since everyone has a different choice, I will decide,"

said the Duke of York. "We will play at fox and geese. You shall all be the geese, and I will be the fox."

And as they all dispersed, except the Princess Elizabeth and little Bridget, who remained looking on, the young prince bent down his head, rounded his shoulders as much as he could, and altered his gait, so as to give a grotesque representation of the Duke of Gloucester.

Though absurd, the likeness was instantly recognized, and the younger girls screamed with laughter, as the little prince chased them about the room, marching in a very haughty manner, like Gloucester.

Seeing what was going on, the pages joined in the merriment, and the governesses and tutors looked round from the marteau table, at which they were seated, and smiled.

The royal children were in the very midst of the fun, when the arras curtain masking the entrance to the adjoining apartment was suddenly drawn aside, and the king and queen came in, closely followed by the Duke of Gloucester.

CHAPTER IV

HOW EDWARD DEEPLY RESENTED THE AFFRONT OFFERED HIM BY LOUIS, AND VOWED TO INVADE FRANCE AGAIN

So quiet was the entrance of the royal party, and so engrossed were the young Duke of York and the little princesses by their game, that for a few moments they were quite unconscious they were observed by the very person who ought not to have seen them.

Gloucester had, therefore, the mortification of seeing himself mimicked by his youthful nephew; but what was more annoying, he heard the laughter and jests excited by the representation.

Nevertheless, he preserved his countenance, and would have feigned not to understand what was going on if Malbouche, who was close behind him, had not called his attention to the little duke.

"Perdie! his highness is a rare mimic," he cried. "He has caught me to the life."

"Go to, knave!" rejoined Gloucester. "The mockery is not meant for thee, as thou well know'st."

"For whom, then, can it be intended?" said the jester, innocently. "I cannot suppose the duke would ridicule your grace. Yet, now I look again, it may be so."

At this moment the game stopped, and the little actors engaged in it seemed abashed. The principal offender expected to be severely reprimanded, but the king merely said to him:

"Personal deformities ought never to be derided. You must not do the like again, or you will be corrected. Go and apologize to the duke, your uncle."

The young prince instantly obeyed. Assuming a penitential air, he went up to Gloucester, and said:

"Your pardon, gentle uncle, if I have offended you."

"Nay, I have been highly diverted by your drollery, fair nephew," replied Gloucester. "But 'tis not always safe to mimic people to their face. There are some who might resent it, though I am not one of them."

"I hope you will not bear me malice, gentle uncle," said the little duke. "They say you are spiteful; but I do not believe it, for I have ever found you good-natured."

"And so I am," rejoined Gloucester. "They who call me spiteful do me great injustice," he added, glancing at the queen. "I am as inoffensive as a lap-dog—unless provoked."

"And then as savage as a wild boar," muttered Malbouche.

"Methinks my uncle Gloucester is really angry with me," observed the Duke of York, in a whisper, to the queen. "He

says he is not, but the glance of his eye contradicted his words."

"Rest easy, fair son," she rejoined, in the same tone. "I will make your peace with him anon. But offend him not again; for, as I have often before told you, he is extremely malignant."

"He is watching us now, and guesses what you are saying," whispered the duke. "Heaven save me from him!"

Among Edward's redeeming qualities was his love for his children, who were all warmly attached to him, though the strict etiquette observed at court prevented any strong demonstration of their regard.

As soon as they were aware of his presence, they all advanced ceremoniously towards him, attended by their governesses and tutors, and each made him a profound obeisance, and another reverence to the queen.

The king, however, took all his younger children in his arms, and kissed them affectionately.

Little Bridget appeared to be his favorite, for he gazed tenderly into her face, as he held her up before him.

"And so you wish to become a nun, my little darling?" he asked. "What put the notion in thy head!"

"Heaven, sire," she replied, in her childish voice. "The queen, my mother, has promised to place me in a convent."

"Only for a time," observed her majesty.

"And I promise to wed thee to a king, my beloved child," said Edward. "Thou may'st therefore choose between a palace and a convent."

"I choose the convent," replied Bridget.

"Then I shall lose thee," observed the king, with a sigh.

"No, sire; you will always know where to find me," she replied. "And I shall always be able to pray for your majesty and the queen."

"Heaven bless thee, my sweet child!" exclaimed Edward, kissing her, as he set her down.

He then turned to the Princess Elizabeth, who was standing near, and said :

“Ah! Madame la Dauphine, you will soon attain the exalted position to which you are destined. Within a week you will set out for Paris, there to seek your husband, the Dauphin. I am in hourly expectation of a messenger from the Lord Howard, our ambassador at the court of France, and I doubt not I shall receive from King Louis a satisfactory answer to my peremptory demand that your marriage with the Dauphin be forthwith solemnized. I will brook no further delay; and to prevent any more trifling on his part, I have given him to understand that his engagement, made with me at Picquigny, must now be fulfilled, or he must prepare for war.”

“I hope this demand may not lead to a rupture between your majesty and King Louis,” observed the princess. “I should grieve to be the cause of a war.”

“Have no fear,” replied Edward. “I am obliged to use threats to my good cousin. But you will see how mild his answer will be. As I have just said, you may prepare for your immediate departure for Paris.”

“I am ready to obey your majesty’s command in all things,” said the princess. “But I cannot be happier at the French court than I am here. Possibly I may never see England again, and that thought makes me feel sad at times.”

“Then do not let it trouble you more,” said the king. “Be sure the Dauphin will not prevent you from visiting us, should you feel so inclined. But you will become so enamored of France, that you will have no desire to quit the country. The French court is far more splendid than our own, and will be far gayer when you are its mistress.”

“Wedded to the Dauphin, you will be quite my equal,” said the queen.

“And the king’s state of health forbids all chance of long life, so you will soon be queen,” added Edward.

"I hope the Dauphin will like me," said the princess.

"Be as good a wife to him as the queen, your mother, has been to me, and he cannot fail to be content," said the king.

"I will strive to imitate her, sire," replied the princess.

"One piece of counsel I will venture to give you, Madame la Dauphine," said Gloucester. "Meddle with nothing while Louis lives. When he is gone, do what you please."

"Sound advice," cried Edward. "You cannot be too careful with the jealous old king."

Just then the lord chamberlain entered the room with a letter.

"Ha! the messenger has arrived from France?" cried Edward.

"This instant, my liege," replied Hastings; "and he brings this letter from Lord Howard to your majesty. I trust its contents will please you."

"Have you any doubt?" said the king, looking at him.

"I doubt all that comes from King Louis, sire," replied Hastings.

Edward eagerly broke the seal of the letter, and as he scanned its contents, those who watched him—almost every eye was upon him—could perceive that he was agitated by suppressed fury.

When he had finished reading the despatch, he crushed it in his hand, and flinging it from him, gave way to a violent explosion of rage.

"Ah, thou liar and deceiver!" he exclaimed. "Perjured and perfidious as thou art, bitterly shalt thou rue thy treachery! Never will I rest till I have taken vengeance upon thee; never will I forgive the outrageous affront offered me! I swear it by my father's head! Within a month I will invade thy territories with an army doubling in number that which I took with me before; and when I have taken thy kingdom from thee, and made thee and thy son captive, thou wilt regret that thou didst not keep faith with me!"

So furious were the king's looks and gestures as he gave utterance to these menacing words, that the royal children retreated from him in terror, and at a sign from the queen were hurried out of the room by their governesses and tutors.

Only the Prince of Wales and the Princess Elizabeth were left, and they looked frightened.

No one ventured to address the infuriated monarch till this access of rage had passed by; but when he grew somewhat calmer, the queen said to him:

"I comprehend that Louis hath broken his engagement; but what hath happened?"

"Madame," replied Edward, "it pains me to the heart to tell you, but I cannot withhold the fact that our beloved daughter, who has so long borne the title of Dauphine of France, had been outrageously rejected by the double dealer Louis. Yes, my sweet love, 'tis even so," he added to the princess. "Thou, the fairest and best born princess in Europe, hast been shamefully slighted by him."

"In what manner, my liege?" she inquired.

"Lord Howard's letter, which I have just cast from me," replied the king, "informs me that, three days ago, the Dauphin was betrothed at Amboise to Margaret of Austria, daughter of the Duke Maximilian, in the presence of a large crowd of nobles."

"Is my brilliant dream thus ended?" cried the princess, unable to repress her emotion.

"Take comfort, my sweet child," cried the queen, tenderly embracing her. "The king, your father, will make another match for you, better than the one broken off."

"That cannot be," said the princess.

"I promise you shall be a queen," said Edward. "But my first step shall be to punish the offender. I will immediately return to Westminster, and summon the whole of the nobles, and tell them I have resolved to declare war against the perfidious Louis, to avenge the affront offered to us, to them, and

the whole kingdom, in the person of our dearly beloved daughter."

"Every voice will be with you, my liege," said Hastings. "Every sword will be drawn for the princess."

"I pray your majesty to take me with you to France," said the Prince of Wales, kneeling to the king. "I will show the Dauphin that he shall not affront my sister!"

"You shall go," replied Edward. "I am well pleased with the request."

"You may become as renowned as the first Prince of Wales, gentle nephew," said Gloucester. "If his majesty will trust you to my charge, and the campaign lasts long enough, I will teach you the art of war. I trust, my liege, there will be no more treaties."

"Not with Louis," rejoined the king, sternly. "He shall not delude me again. If I sign a peace, it shall be at Paris, and I will dictate my own terms. Come, madame," he added, taking the queen's hand to lead her forth. "Let us to Westminster. This is a bitter disappointment to us both, but the wrong done shall be requited a hundredfold."

"Sister," said the Prince of Wales to the princess, as they followed the royal pair out of the room, "my resolution is taken. Either I will slay the Dauphin, or the Dauphin shall slay me."

"I would not check your valor," she replied, smiling through her tears; "but it is Louis who is in fault, not the dauphin."

"Then I will slay Louis!" rejoined the prince.

CHAPTER V

WHAT PASSED IN THE KING'S ANTE-CHAMBER; AND OF THE SECRET INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY GLOUCESTER TO CATESBY

Edward acted with unwonted energy.

On the day after his return to Westminster, he summoned all his nobles, and acquainting them with the galling affront he had received, announced his intention of at once declaring war against Louis. At the same time, he did not neglect to refer to his own pretensions to the throne of France, but stated emphatically that he was now determined to assert them.

The address was responded to with enthusiasm. All the peers present expressed the greatest indignation at the ill-faith and duplicity of Louis, pronounced the war just and necessary, and raising their hands with one accord, vowed to lay down their lives in his majesty's service.

The lord mayor and the citizens, who were next summoned, were equally enthusiastic, and undertook to raise all the money required.

Moreover, the proclamation of a war with France, which immediately followed, caused great satisfaction throughout the kingdom. Thus Edward had every prospect of obtaining the vengeance he desired.

In return for the hearty support the king had experienced, he gave a series of grand banquets; and he indulged so freely at these entertainments, that his health manifestly suffered.

The change in his appearance was so perceptible, that those who loved him became greatly alarmed; while the few who

desired his death, from ambitious or other motives, began to think that the crisis was at hand. Among the latter was Gloucester. In his dark breast fresh hopes were kindled by his royal brother's recklessness.

On the morning after one of these grand banquets, at which the king had sat longer than usual, and drunk more deeply, several nobles and other important personages were assembled in the anteroom communicating with his majesty's bed-chamber.

Though the hour was somewhat late, Edward had not yet risen, and some curiosity, not unmingled with uneasiness, was exhibited to learn how his majesty had passed the night. The only person allowed entrance to the royal chamber was the Marquis of Dorset, the queen's son by her first marriage. Dorset was Constable of the Tower, and keeper of the king's treasures. The young noble had not yet reappeared.

At length the door opened, and Dorset came forth, looking very grave. In reply to the anxious inquiries addressed to him, he simply said, "His majesty has passed a bad night, and will not be disturbed."

Among the distinguished personages in the ante-room were the Duke of Buckingham and the Lords Hastings and Stanley; and as they were special favorites of the king, and generally admitted to his presence at all times, they naturally concluded that they could now go in; but the Marquis of Dorset, noticing their design, stopped them, and said:

"My lords, the king must not be disturbed."

"How is this, my lord?" cried Hastings. "Is his majesty unwell? 'Tis the first time I have been excluded from his chamber. I will go in!"

"And so will I!" said Buckingham.

"Do as you please, my lords," observed Dorset. "I have repeated his majesty's injunctions."

And, bowing haughtily, he moved on through the ante-chamber.

A strong feeling of animosity, as we have already mentioned, existed between the old nobility and the queen's family, of whom Lord Rivers and the Marquis of Dorset were the head. Hastings and the others were, therefore, highly displeased that Dorset should be preferred to them, but they hesitated to disobey the king's express commands.

"If aught happens, that presumptuous upstart's pride shall be lowered!" said Buckingham. "'Tis my belief he has kept us from seeing his majesty. I hope nothing ails the king."

"Nothing more than a sick headache, caused by last night's excess," said Hastings. "But Dorset would have us believe that his majesty is really ill."

"And so he is," observed Lord Stanley. "Most assuredly, if he continues in this mad course, he will kill himself."

"He will never be able to conduct the war with France in person," said Hastings.

"No; he must relinquish the command of the army to Gloucester," said Buckingham; "and that will mortify his majesty greatly. He counted upon entering Paris in triumph."

"His absence will be a great gain to Louis, and render the issue of the contest doubtful," said Lord Stanley. "'Tis almost to be regretted now that the war has been undertaken."

Just then the Duke of Gloucester entered the ante-chamber, attended by Catesby. He directed his steps towards the three nobles, who advanced to salute him.

"Is not the king visible?" he asked.

"No one has seen him but Dorset," replied Hastings. "But your highness can go in, if you list."

"Is he ill? Is Doctor Lewis with him?" said Gloucester, quickly. "If so, I will see him."

"His majesty, I trow, will be well enough to join the banquet this evening, and drink more wine of Chalosse," observed Buckingham, significantly.

“Ha! is that all?” cried Gloucester.

“Your highness should dissuade him from his fatal course,” said Hastings. “If he persists in it, there can but be one result.”

“I dissuade him!” cried Gloucester. “I have no influence with him, as you wot well. Get Mistress Shore to advise him. She might check him in this baneful habit. None else can. I am sorry not to see the king—but it matters not. He might not be in the humor to talk to me. I am about to set out to York, as I have some matters to arrange there for his majesty, before we start for France.”

Then, taking Buckingham’s arm, he whispered in his ear, “Should aught happen—you understand—should aught happen, I say, send an express to me to York.”

“Without an instant’s delay,” replied the duke.

“Enough!” replied Gloucester. Then, turning to the others, he said aloud, “Farewell, my lords! Tell the king I have been here, but would not disturb him. I will write to his majesty from York.”

With this, he moved off, bowing haughtily to the throng of nobles, as he passed through their midst.

Near the door the room was clear, and halting there, he said to Catesby, by whom he was still attended, “Remain here. Attend the banquet to-night, and write me word how his majesty looks. Dost heed?”

Catesby bowed assent, and the duke added, in a low and deeply-significant voice, “The work thou hast to do must be no longer delayed. Thou hast the phial I gave thee?”

“I carry it ever about me, your highness,” repeated the other.

“Use it to-night,” said Gloucester. “Use it cautiously, as I bade thee. A few drops will suffice. The king drinks nothing but wine of Chalosse. Hand him the cup.”

Catesby bowed, and the duke quitted the ante-chamber.

CHAPTER VI

*HOW THE WARRANT FOR TEN THOUSAND GOLDEN CROWNS
BY THE KING TO JANE DISAPPEARED*

Edward declined to hold any audience that morning, on the plea of slight indisposition ; but as soon as he had completed his toilette, which occupied him for some time—for, as already stated, he was extraordinarily particular about his dress—he repaired to Jane's apartments, which were situated in a wing of the palace, overlooking the gardens and the river, splendidly furnished, and hung with the finest arras.

The fair mistress of these magnificent rooms received him almost ceremoniously, as was her wont ; but he looked so exhausted, that she took his hand and led him to a fauteuil, into which he immediately sank.

Seeing his exhausted condition, she caused some refreshments to be brought, and poured him out a cup of hippocras with her own hand. He only ate a few conserves and cates, but the cordial beverage revived him.

At a sign from his majesty, all the attendants withdrew, and they were left alone together.

“I must have done with these banquets, Jane,” said the king. “Were it not that I have invited the lord mayor and the chief citizens of London to dine with me to-day, I would forswear revelry altogether. But I cannot disappoint my worthy friends at this juncture. However, to-day's banquet shall be the last. On that I am firmly resolved.”

“I have little reliance on your good resolutions, sire,” said Jane. “Formed in the morning, they are constantly broken in the evening.”

"In sooth, I find it difficult to refrain," said Edward. "This hippocras is very good. Fill my cup again."

Jane shook her head, and said, playfully, "Your majesty is in my hands now, and I shall take care of you. If I could wait upon you at the banquet this evening, you should not exceed."

"You shall be my cup-bearer, if you list," replied Edward, smiling.

"I take you at your word, my liege, and accept the office," she rejoined. "I have still the costume I wore in France."

"Then don it to-night," said the king. "Be Isidore again, and place yourself behind my chair. When you bid me hold, I will drink no more."

"Oh! my liege," she exclaimed, "do but act up to the wise resolve you have just formed, and far greater power will be yours than you have ever yet enjoyed. No monarch in Europe is so proudly placed as you are now. Your throne is secured. Your subjects idolize you. Your enemies fear you. You have sons to succeed you—daughters contracted to princes. All that a great king can achieve, you have accomplished. You have fought many battles, and have never been defeated; nor will you ever be defeated in the field. But you have an enemy more to be dreaded than your stoutest adversary—more than Louis himself. That enemy is here," she added, holding up the goblet. "If you conquer not this mortal foe, he will conquer you. 'Tis right you should hear the truth from me, and, however painful it may be to speak it, I cannot remain silent. Already those who hope to profit by your death have noted the change, and laid their plans. The ambitious and designing Gloucester, against whom I have repeatedly warned your majesty, has watched you narrowly."

"Gloucester has set out for York this very morn," remarked Edward.

"I am glad of it," she replied. "But he has left many friends behind in whom your majesty places confidence. Their schemes, however, will prove futile if you are true to yourself. Be the great Edward whom I first loved, whom I still love, and shall ever love; but who will sacrifice power, life, and love, if he shakes not off the fetters in which he is bound."

For some moments the king seemed buried in thought. At last he raised his head, and looking earnestly at her, said:

"You have touched me deeply, Jane. To-morrow I will wholly refrain from the maddening potion."

"Why not to-night, sire?" she cried. "Oh, be persuaded by me!"

"A revel, more or less, cannot affect me seriously."

"Consult your physician, Dr. Lewis, sire. He will tell you differently."

"You know I eschew physic, and never take advice from Doctor Lewis," replied the king. "Surely, 'tis enough that you will be present to stint me in my cups! Were Alice Fordham here, she might attend you as Claude. What has become of her?"

"She has returned to her husband, my liege; and the gifts I have bestowed upon her have made her welcome to him. But she has deceived me—basely deceived me—and I no longer love her."

"In what manner has she deceived you?" inquired the king. "I am aware you have dismissed her, but I know not her fault."

"I discovered that she has taken bribes from the Duke of Gloucester, sire," replied Jane. "I did not mention the matter to your majesty, because I thought it would anger you."

"Again Gloucester!" exclaimed the king. "He seems to be plotting everywhere."

"Since he could not induce me to take part in his schemes,

sire, he tried Alice Fordham," replied Jane; "and with her he succeeded."

"Ha! this must be inquired into!" cried Edward, fiercely. "'Tis well for himself that he hath gone to York, or I would have sent him at once to the Tower. But I will have him back; and if I find him guilty, he shall——But no, no!" he added, with a sudden change of manner, and speaking in a hollow voice; "I must not have a second brother's blood upon my soul! I have had no peace since Clarence died."

"But Gloucester wrested the warrant for his brother's death from your majesty," said Jane. "His, therefore, is the guilt. I urge no severe measures against Gloucester, but my love for your majesty bids me say, 'Beware of him!'"

In the hope of chasing away the king's gloom, Jane took up her lute, and sang a tender romance of which he had once been very fond. He listened as if entranced. The notes vibrated through his breast and recalled the days when he had first heard the song.

When she ceased singing, he said, "Do you recollect, Jane, that it was on this very day—now seven years ago—that I first beheld you?"

"I recollect it well, sire," she replied, with something like a sigh. "The past seems like a dream to me."

"A happy dream, I hope?" he said.

"Too happy, sire," she rejoined. "Moments of sadness have occurred, but they have soon passed. 'Tis the wakening from this long, blissful dream that I dread. I would fain slumber on to the end. Oh, if I were to lose your majesty, what would become of me?"

"You will be wealthy, Jane," he rejoined.

"But I shall have lost all I care for—all I love!" she exclaimed. "Wealth will be nothing to me. I have not loved your majesty for the many rich gifts you have bestowed upon me, but for yourself."

“There is nothing mercenary in your disposition, Jane; that I well know,” he replied. “Moreover, I am quite aware you have given away large sums; so that you may not, after all, be so rich as you ought to be——”

“Sire,” she interrupted, “I have enough. I want nothing.”

“But you may want more than you have,” cried Edward. “I may be snatched from you suddenly. ’Tis my business to provide for you, and I will do so at once. Here is an order on the Marquis of Dorset, the keeper of my treasures, already signed and sealed,” he added, taking a paper from the richly-ornamented *gibecière* that hung from his girdle. “Fill in the name, and the amount—ten thousand golden crowns.”

“Sire, ’tis too much!” she cried.

“Obey my behest,” he said.

Unable to refuse, she proceeded to a table, on which writing materials were placed, and wrote as the king had commanded her.

While she was thus occupied, Edward arose; and as soon as she had finished, he took the paper from her and examined it.

“This sum will be paid you by Dorset,” he said, as he gave her back the warrant. “’Tis meant as a provision for you in event of my death; and I trust you will not yield to the too-generous impulses of your nature, and by giving a portion of it away, defeat my object. Keep it for yourself, I pray you. You may need it.”

Jane could make no reply, for emotion stopped her. After a vain effort to speak, she fell into his arms, and shed tears upon his breast.

The scene just described was witnessed by an unseen observer.

A secret door behind the hangings, of the existence of which both the king and Jane were ignorant, had been noiselessly opened, and the person who passed through it slightly

raised the arras, and could therefore see and hear what took place.

After a while, Jane recovered from her emotion, and, as she looked up with streaming eyes at the king, he bent down and kissed her brow.

“Adieu, *ma mie!*” he said. “You will attend upon me at the banquet to-night?”

“Doubt it not, sire,” she replied. “Oh, that I could banish these misgivings from my breast!”

He smiled to reassure her, but somewhat sadly; for he was not altogether free from misgiving himself.

They paused for a moment at the door before the king went forth, and she watched his stately figure as he moved slowly along the corridor, attended by a couple of pages. Often had she thus watched him; but she never beheld him take that walk again.

In her agitation, Jane had dropped the warrant given her by the king, nor did she think about it till his majesty had disappeared. She then looked about for it; but it was gone.

Astonished and alarmed by the circumstance, she summoned an attendant, but could ascertain nothing satisfactory. No one had entered the room. Careful search was made, but the warrant could not be found.

As will have been surmised, it had fallen into the hands of the person concealed behind the hangings.

While the king and Jane stood together near the door, completely occupied with each other, this individual, who was very slightly built, and habited like a page, crept cautiously forth, took up the paper, and regained the hiding-place without being noticed.

On discovering her loss, Jane was in a state of distraction. Her first impulse was to acquaint the king with what had happened; but, on consideration, she resolved to defer all mention of the circumstance till the morrow.

CHAPTER VII

OF EDWARD'S LAST BANQUET AND HOW IT ENDED

In the great banqueting hall of the palace, in the centre of the high table, placed at the upper part of the hall, beneath a gorgeous cloth of estate, embroidered in gold, with the royal badges of the falcon and fetterlock, the rose and sun, and the white hart, sat Edward.

Reserved for the king and his most distinguished guests, this elevated table was covered with perfumed damask, wrought with flowers and figures, and furnished with magnificent vessels of gold and silver.

Two other long tables, covered with finest cloths of diaper, and resplendent with plate, ran down the sides of the hall, so as to leave a great space free to the innumerable officers and attendants, cup-bearers, carvers, sewers, and gentlemen waiters, all in the royal livery.

At these lower tables sat the citizens and the general company—the lord mayor, who was no other than our old acquaintance, Randal Rubicel, the haberdasher, being assigned a place with the nobles.

Trumpeters, with clarions adorned with fringed cloth of gold, stood in the centre of the hall, and minstrels were placed in a gallery, to enliven the company with their strains during the repast.

The entertainment was conducted with regal state. At the lower tables all were seated; but when the trumpets announced the entrance of the king, the guests immediately arose.

Edward was marshaled to his seat, beneath the cloth of estate, by the lord chamberlain and the vice-chamberlain,

each carrying a white staff. He was attended by several officers in embroidered velvet doublets, all of whom had chains of gold round the neck. Among these was Catesby.

When the king was seated, Isidore, who was attired in precisely the same dress he had worn in France, took his place behind the royal chair. The handsome cup-bearer looked remarkably well, and excited general admiration.

Edward was magnificently arrayed, as usual. Over the richly embroidered velvet doublet that encased his now portly person, he wore a purple robe, with long hanging sleeves, lined with the most precious furs.

On his right and left sat the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Northumberland, the Earl of Hastings, the Marquis of Dorset, and other nobles, all splendidly attired. The lord mayor was placed between Buckingham and Hastings, and being clad in his robes, and having the collar of S.S. round his neck, presented a very imposing appearance. Strangely altered was Randal Rubicel, and scarcely recognizable as the gallant young haberdasher of former days. He had been highly prosperous in his calling, and had grown enormously corpulent as well as rich. His features, however, were not so much changed as his person, and he was still good-looking. He was devoted to the king, and had lent his majesty a large sum for the proposed war with France.

Illumined by great candles, almost as thick as torches, and made of perfumed wax, covered with silver vessels, and occupied by the goodly company described, the tables looked magnificent. As we have intimated, the body of the hall was thronged with the various officers belonging to the royal household; and through this crowd—just before the second service began—marched a score of yeomen of the kitchen, bearing great dishes, preceded by the master cook, a very stately personage, clad in damask velvet, with a chain of gold round his neck, and bearing a white wand. Trumpets were blown as these dishes were set upon the table, and

the minstrels played while the contents of the dishes were discussed.

Great hilarity prevailed, for though Edward had resolved to practise unwonted moderation that day, his guests had every temptation to exceed, for the wines were as abundant and as excellent as the viands, and served in flowing goblets.

According to the taste of the period, many curious and admirably executed devices, representing the king's palaces, tournaments, and even the meeting between Edward and Louis at Picquigny, were placed upon the table. These pretty receptacles were filled with confectionery, comfits, cakes, and spices, which were served to those who cared to taste them.

Altogether, the banquet, destined to be his last, was one of the best ever given by the luxurious monarch ; and from circumstances connected with it, which we shall presently relate, it was long afterwards remembered.

As the repast proceeded, Edward recovered his spirits, and felt so much better, and in such a mood for enjoyment, that it was with difficulty he could put a constraint upon himself. But though he did not entirely refrain, he was far more temperate than usual.

As Isidore came forward with a silver flagon to fill his cup, he remarked, in a low voice :

“Dost thou not recognize thy former suitor? He is seated on the right, next to the Duke of Buckingham.”

“Why that is the lord mayor, my liege,” exclaimed Isidore.

“Marry, the lord mayor was once thy suitor!” observed Edward, laughing. “Look at him again.”

“As I live, 'tis Randal Rubicel ! exclaimed Isidore.

“'Tis not surprising you knew him not at first, since he has waxed so wondrous fat,” said Edward. “I need not say he is no longer a bachelor, for there is a lady mayoress ; but he is a most worthy and liberal man, and I have a great

regard for him. The lord mayor, however, is not the only one of your former suitors here present. All the others have been invited by my command. You will descry them at the lower tables."

Stepping back, Isidore looked around, and soon discovered that the king was not jesting.

Yes! there they all were. There sat Simon Muttlebury, the grocer; Puncheon, the vintner; Serge, the cloth-worker; Buckram, the mercer; Hide, the skinner, and half a dozen others, whose features Isidore well remembered, though, like Randal Rubicel, they were all much changed. Most of them had grown stout, and all had the easy, comfortable look of married men.

But where was Shore? Was he present on this grand festive occasion? Not as a guest, but he might have come thither uninvited.

So Jane thought; and as her eye wandered over the crowd in the body of the hall, it alighted upon Father Sylvius.

Joyously the feast went on. Fresh dishes were brought in. The sewers and carvers did their devoir. Again and again, the goblets were replenished by the cup-bearers, and with the choicest wines. The minstrels played their liveliest strains. Laughter, scarcely subdued by the king's presence, resounded from the lower tables.

Yet despite the hilarity and enjoyment everywhere prevailing, Edward became sad. Sombre thoughts crossed him. With the sounds of revelry ringing in his ears—with the spectacle before him of that grand banquet and his joyous guests—he felt as if he could take no part in the general conviviality.

A warning voice, whose low accents were audible amid all the din, seemed to whisper that he had not long to live. He did not dare to raise his eyes, lest he should read in characters of fire that his kingdom would be taken from him. But he almost fancied the terrible writing was there.

Like Jane, he had descried Father Sylvius amid the crowd in the hall, and the unlooked-for and unseasonable appearance of the friar awakened a train of gloomy thought, that quickly deepened, as we have described. A mortal sickness seized the king, and he felt he could not shake it off; but, unwilling to alarm the company, he called for wine, hoping a good draught might restore him.

His accents startled Jane, who now for the first time remarked the deathly pallor that had bespread his features. She would have instantly obeyed the command, but the flagon she held was well-nigh empty.

At this moment, Catesby interposed. The opportunity he sought to execute his direful purpose had now arrived. It came suddenly, but he was prepared.

"Here is a goblet of his majesty's favorite wine of Chaulosse," he said.

"Give it me!" cried Jane, almost snatching the cup from him in her anxiety to serve the king.

"Here is that which will revive you, sire," she said, as she handed him the cup.

Edward drank deeply of the poisoned draught; and as Catesby watched him, he saw that the work was done.

For a few minutes the doomed monarch felt better, and those nearest him, who shared Jane's anxiety, thought he had rallied.

But the signs of improvement were fallacious, and, in reality, he was much worse. His pale cheek flushed, and his eye blazed, but it was with an unnatural lustre. He attempted to converse, but his speech was thick, and his voice hoarse, as if from intoxication. Indeed, Buckingham and Hastings, who were well aware of his intemperate habits, attributed his condition to excess.

But Jane knew otherwise. Being close to him, she whispered in his ear:

"You are unwell, sire—very unwell! I pray you retire from the banquet."

Feeling the advice was good, Edward immediately endeavored to comply with it.

As he arose from his seat—not without great difficulty—the nobles on each side of him rose likewise, and at this sight the utmost consternation prevailed among the assemblage.

The din of revelry instantly ceased, wine-cups raised to the lip were set down untasted, and the strains of the minstrels were hushed.

But the alarm was only momentary, the company being quickly reassured by the Duke of Buckingham, who, by Edward's command, called out :

“His majesty is compelled, by slight indisposition, to withdraw from the banquet ; but it is his royal pleasure that no interruption take place in it. The king hopes to return before the close of the feast. Meanwhile, he drinks to you all.”

At this announcement, the whole assemblage arose, and bowing around, the king drained the fatal cup.

Amid the murmurs of applause that followed, Edward retired, leaning on Jane's shoulder, and attended by Hastings and half-a-dozen pages, and proceeded slowly towards his own apartments.

The banquet went on as merrily as before the interruption, but the king did not return.

After an hour or so, gentlemen ushers went round the tables, and, with grave looks, informed the guests that his majesty was seriously ill. Thereupon, the assemblage immediately dispersed.

Great confusion ensued, but while the guests were departing, Father Sylvius found his way to the corridor, and, without being questioned, proceeded along it to the king's private apartments.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT OCCURRED AT THE KING'S DEATH-BED

In a magnificent chamber of the palace, hung with finest arras, and lighted by a dim lamp, in a state bed, with tester and ceiler of cloth of gold, having heavy embroidered curtains, and a counterpane furred with ermine, propped up by pillows, lay the royal Edward.

Immediately after the king's seizure at the banquet, Jane had laid aside her disguise, and resumed her own attire, and was now watching by the slumbering monarch's couch.

On his removal to the chamber where we find him, Edward had been seized by violent sickness, after which he seemed somewhat better, and showed a strong disposition to sleep. Dr. Lewis, his physician, regarded this as a good sign, and declared, if he slept well throughout the night, he might recover—otherwise he would never rise from his couch.

Before resigning himself to sleep, the king expressly enjoined that Mistress Shore, and no other, should watch by his couch, and the command was strictly obeyed.

Every precaution being taken to ensure quiet, Edward slept throughout the greater part of the night, not calmly, but heavily, while the groans that occasionally broke from him showed he was troubled by painful dreams. So distressing were these sounds to hear, that Jane almost felt inclined to disobey the physician's orders, and wake him.

It was now the third hour of morn, and Jane was still anxiously watching by the couch—sometimes kneeling and praying for the royal sufferer.

Sad thoughts passed through her breast during this long, painful vigil. The end of her happiness seemed come,

for she could not persuade herself that the king would recover. Indeed, as she gazed at him, she felt sure he could not live long.

While thus alternately watching and praying, she heard the door softly open, and Doctor Lewis came noiselessly in.

A man of middle age, with a grave cast of countenance, rendered graver than usual by the present circumstances, the physician had a somewhat spare figure, and was clothed in a long, dark gown, edged with fur, above which he wore a furred cape. His long locks were covered by a black velvet skull-cap.

Stopping in the middle of the apartment, he signed Jane to come to him, and a few whispered words passed between them.

"Has my royal patient slept throughout the night?" inquired Doctor Lewis.

"Uninterruptedly, as you see him now," replied Jane.

"That is well!" said the physician. "Let him sleep on. When he awakens, I shall be able to decide."

With this, he stepped towards the couch, and gazed for some minutes on the slumbering monarch.

Apparently, the inspection satisfied him; for he gave Jane a reassuring look, and quitted the room.

Overcome by fatigue and anxiety, Jane soon afterwards fell into a sort of doze, from which she was aroused by a slight touch on the shoulder, and looking up, she perceived Father Sylvius standing beside her.

"You here!—and at this moment!" she exclaimed, in a low voice, so as not to disturb the king, whose heavy breathing could be distinctly heard.

"'Tis the very moment when I might be expected," rejoined Father Sylvius. "I must speak to the king."

"You shall not approach his couch!" she cried, placing herself between him and the sleeping monarch.

"Stand aside, woman!" cried the friar, authoritatively.

Unable to disobey the injunction, she retreated in terror to the side of the room.

Advancing to the couch, Father Sylvius laid his hand on Edward's shoulder.

For a moment, the king did not stir; but at length he opened his eyes, and fixed them upon the intruder.

"Who art thou?" demanded Edward.

"Dost thou not know me?" rejoined the monk.

And throwing back his hood, he disclosed a well-remembered face.

"'Tis Alban Shore!" said the king.

"Ay; 'tis that much-injured man," rejoined the friar.

"I confess I have wronged thee," said Edward, feebly; "but I will make amends."

"Thou canst not make me amends," rejoined Shore. "As David took Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite, so thou hast taken my wife from me."

Edward answered with a groan.

"I would thou hadst slain me with the sword, as David slew Uriah," pursued Shore; "then had I been spared many years of misery! Hearken to me, oh, king! In this dread hour, when thy life is drawing to a close, and when naught can save thee, thou repentest thee of the great wrong thou hast done; but thy repentance comes too late."

"No; not too late!" murmured Jane. "Heaven is always merciful!"

"Who spoke?" said Edward.

"She whom thou hast destroyed," replied Shore. "But neither she nor thou art penitent, and both shall perish!"

"Say what thou wilt to me," cried Jane, "but torment not the king!"

"Back, woman!" exclaimed Shore, fiercely. "Thy place is no longer here. Thy days of sinful pleasure are over. Henceforth thou wilt be shunned; for the arm that has shielded thee will soon be powerless, and those who praised

thee will revile thee. Vainly wilt thou flee. Thou canst not escape from the punishment that awaits thee. A curse will cling to thee, and hold thee fast !”

Half-stunned, Jane looked at him in terror, but could not speak.

“Call the guard !” groaned Edward.

“Ay ; call the guard !” said Shore. “Complete thy work, and cause me to be put to death. I care not. I have had my revenge.”

“As thou dost hope for mercy thyself, show some mercy to me !” implored Jane.

“My heart is adamant,” rejoined Shore. “There is pity in it neither for thee nor for the king.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Jane, “this is too much !”

And she sank down insensible at the foot of the couch.

“Wretch ! thou hast killed her !” cried Edward.

“No ; she will revive presently,” said Shore. “But it were better for her that she died now than hereafter. She will have to drain the cup of misery to the dregs.”

“How know'st thou this, thou prophet of evil ?” said the king.

“How do I know it ?” cried Shore. “Because I have prayed that it may be so, and my prayer will be granted ! She whom thou hast fed with the choicest viands, and clothed with the richest attire, will die of starvation, and almost without raiment ! A ban will be upon her ! No one will aid her ! —all will shun her ! Thus will the great king's favorite perish !”

“At least thou shalt perish before her !” cried Edward.

And raising himself with great difficulty, he called out, “Without there ! Hoh !”

The effort was too much, and he fell back on the pillows.

CHAPTER IX

THE KING'S LAST GIFTS TO JANE

In answer to the king's summons, Doctor Lewis, accompanied by half a dozen pages, rushed into the room.

"What would your majesty?" cried the physician.

"Seize on that friar!" said Edward. "Deliver him to the guard."

"No friar is here, my liege," replied the physician, thinking the king was delirious.

"Can he have vanished?" cried Edward, gazing round, and unable to discern his tormentor.

"No one has entered the room, my liege, or gone forth--of that I am certain," said the physician. "I have been in the ante-chamber throughout the night."

"It must have been the fiend in person," said Edward.

"Doubtless, your majesty has been troubled by a dream," said the physician, confirmed in his notion that the king was light-headed.

"It may be so," said Edward. "Ha! here is the proof that it was real;" pointing to Jane, who had been partly concealed by the hangings of the bed. "Get restoratives quickly."

"I have all that is needful with me, sire," replied Dr. Lewis.

And kneeling down beside Jane, he raised her head, and allowing her to breathe at a smelling bottle which he produced, she quickly regained consciousness. He then assisted her to a seat.

"Clear the room," said Edward in a low voice, to Doctor Lewis. "I have something to say to you."

And at a sign from the physician, all the pages went forth.

"Shall I go likewise, sire?" said Jane.

"No," replied Edward. "Stay with me a little longer."

It was a dread moment.

The physician's hand was upon the king's pulse. His eye was upon the king's countenance.

Jane watched him with intense anxiety, but she could read nothing in his impassive features.

At length the examination was over, and the king, who had remained perfectly calm, said to the physician:

"Let me know my fate."

"Sire," replied the physician, gravely, "I will not attempt to conceal from your majesty that there is great danger——"

"I understand," said Edward, seeing that he hesitated to proceed. "You can give me no hope?"

"I would have your majesty prepare for the worst," said Doctor Lewis, somewhat evasively.

During the pause that ensued, Jane vainly endeavored to stifle her sobs.

The silence was broken by the king.

In a firm voice, he said:

"How many hours are left me? Fear not to tell me the truth."

"Sire," replied the physician, "unless some change takes place—of which I despair—you will not see another night."

The tone in which this dread announcement was uttered forbade all hope.

Unable to repress her anguish, Jane buried her face in her hands, and wept aloud.

"Leave me for a few minutes," said Edward to the physician.

"Constrain yourself, I pray you, sire, or you will abridge the little time left you," said Doctor Lewis.

"Jane," said the king, as soon as they were alone.

She arose instantly, and stood by his side.

Taking her hand, and gazing at her with inexpressible tenderness, Edward said :

“ We must now part forever, sweetheart.”

“ Our separation will not be long, sire,” she replied, “ I shall soon follow you.”

“ No, sweetheart,” he said ; “ you must live. Be constant to my memory—that is all I ask.”

“ I cannot live without your majesty,” she cried, despairingly.

“ You have never yet disobeyed me, Jane,” he said ; “ and I am well assured you will not disobey my last injunction. Indulge not in unavailing sorrow, but think of the happy hours we have spent together, and of the love I have ever borne you. Methinks I have amply provided for you ; but if you desire aught more, it shall be yours.”

“ You have already done too much for me, sire,” she cried.

“ 'Tis well I signed that order on the treasury to-day,” pursued Edward. “ Fail not to present it early in the morn to the Marquis of Dorset, and obtain the money. After my death, some difficulties may be raised. How is this? You look embarrassed !”

“ Sire,” she replied, “ I must not conceal from you that the warrant you gave me is lost.”

“ Lost !” exclaimed the king. “ Impossible !”

“ Your majesty may remember that I attended you to the door,” said Jane. “ When I came back, the warrant was gone, and I have not been able to find it since. But do not let the matter disturb you. I shall not require the money.”

“ Jane,” cried the king, with a troubled look, “ strange misgivings cross me. My designs to benefit you seem unaccountably thwarted. I see not why the warrant should be stolen, save from a mischievous motive, since it is useless to any other than yourself. To-morrow, if I live so long, the lord treasurer shall pay you the money. Meantime, take

these," he added, giving her a splendid chain set with diamonds, and some other ornaments lying on a small table near the bed. "Take them, I insist," he added, forcing the articles upon her.

Just then the physician entered the room.

"Never wert thou so unwelcome!" cried Edward. "Yet, since you have come, bear witness that I have given these ornaments to Mistress Shore."

"Bear witness, also, that I receive them most reluctantly," said Jane; "and only do so because I would not willingly distress his majesty."

"I shall not forget what I am told," rejoined the physician.

"Now that the moment for separation has arrived," cried Jane, "I feel that I have left much unsaid that I ought to say to your majesty. Grant me a few more minutes, I beseech you, good Master Physician!"

"Be brief, then, madame, I implore you," said Doctor Lewis, removing to the further part of the room, so as to be out of hearing.

"If it be possible, sire," said Jane, addressing the king in a low, earnest voice, "to effect a sincere reconciliation between Lord Rivers and the Marquis of Dorset, and the Duke of Buckingham and the Lords Hastings and Stanley, it might prevent future troubles."

"It shall be done," rejoined Edward. "Unluckily, Lord Rivers is at Ludlow Castle with the Prince of Wales, but the queen will answer for him. I will force the others to become friends."

"I scarce have courage to make the next suggestion, but I must not hesitate. Appoint the queen regent, during Prince Edward's minority, sire. She will govern wisely and well."

"I doubt it not," rejoined the king. "But Gloucester must be lord protector."

"No, sire!" said Jane. "Let Gloucester have no authority!"

“You hate him!” said the king.

“I hate him because he is false to your majesty, and seeks to mount the throne. Give the queen full power, and she will be able to guard the prince against his perfidious uncle—not otherwise.”

“It shall be so,” replied Edward. “If all this can be accomplished, I shall die in peace; but I feel my strength is fast failing me.”

Fearing, from his words, that he was sinking, Jane called to the physician, who flew to the couch. But the king quickly rallied.

“You must not remain with me longer, Jane,” he murmured. “Farewell—farewell forever!”

She felt as if her heart would break; but, restraining herself by a powerful effort, she stooped down, kissed him, and quitted the room.

How she regained her own apartments she knew not, for she seemed to be in a state of stupefaction.

Seeing her condition, her female attendants induced her to lie down, and she soon fell into a profound slumber, from which she did not waken until mid-day.

Her first inquiries were for the king, and she learnt the terrible truth from the looks of her attendants, who vainly strove to conceal it from her.

CHAPTER X

HOW KING EDWARD'S BODY WAS EXPOSED TO PUBLIC VIEW ON THE DAY OF HIS DEATH, IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

On a high catafalque, conspicuously placed in the centre of the nave at Westminster Abbey, and covered with a black velvet pall, edged with silver, and embroidered with the royal badges, the falcon and fetterlock, the rose and sun, and the white hart, lay the lifeless body of the king, who had only breathed his last at an early hour on the same day.

Bared to the waist, the nobly-proportioned frame of the deceased monarch looked as if sculptured in whitest marble, and was full of subdued dignity, repose, grace, and resignation, which gave to his features a peculiar charm.

Over the lower part of the person was thrown an ample cover of cloth of silver, and the head rested upon a large pillow of black satin fringed with silver. Even in death, the majestic features of the king retained their proud expression and beautiful outline.

Immense tapers of yellow wax, set in tall silver candlesticks, burnt at the corners of the catafalque. Youthful incense-bearers, swinging heavy censers, continually fumed the body. Dignitaries of the Abbey knelt around, and a solemn requiem was sung by the choir, while the deep tones of the organ ever and anon pealed along the vaulted roof.

From pillar to pillar, along the aisles, and in the transept, magnificent arras was stretched, so that a full view of the royal body could only be obtained from certain points indicated by gentlemen ushers provided with white wands.

Yeomen of the guard were likewise stationed at the en-

trance to the choir, and at the various chapels, to prevent intrusion; but the deportment of the crowd was singularly quiet and decorous.

Around the catafalque a clear space was kept by halberdiers, stationed some two feet apart, so as not to obstruct the view; the tallest and finest men being selected for the occasion.

Within the circle thus formed, and which was strictly guarded by the halberdiers, who crossed their pikes when needful, several distinguished personages were gathered; the chief among them being Lord Hastings, the grand chamberlain, by whom the solemn ceremonial was conducted, the Duke of Buckingham, and Lord Stanley, the Marquis of Dorset, Lord Gray, and the queen's chamberlain, Lord Dacre.

Besides these, there were the lord mayor, the sheriffs, and aldermen, in their full robes, and several of the important citizens, who had banqueted recently with Edward in the adjacent palace.

Another personage was likewise allowed a place within the circle, although his parti-colored garments seemed out of character with the scene. This was Malbouche. The jester, whose office was gone, wore a most rueful countenance, and perhaps no one among the assemblage more sincerely regretted his royal master than the poor knave.

All the nobles just mentioned were members of the council—the Marquis of Dorset and Lord Gray, the queen's sons by her first marriage, holding the chief places; and they had judged it expedient, in consequence of the suddenness of the king's death, that the body should be exposed in the manner described—first, to convince the somewhat incredulous populace that his majesty was actually dead; and secondly, that he had come fairly by his end.

A like course had been pursued with regard to the unfortunate Henry VI. whose remains were exhibited in St. Paul's; but in that case, the murdered king was placed in a coffin,

and covered up, so that the face alone could be distinguished. No requiem was then sung, and no sympathizing spectator was permitted to approach the mangled corpse, from which, it was said, blood burst forth.

On the present occasion every possible honor was paid to the departed monarch. Masses were performed, and dirges sung. Every countenance bespoke sorrow, for those who entertained other feelings did not dare to manifest them. If not deeply mourned, Edward was sincerely regretted. Whatever may have been his faults, he had won the regard of his subjects, and his popularity was at its zenith when he was prematurely cut off. Many a tearful glance was cast at his noble person. Many a prayer was breathed for the repose of his soul. If he had been a slave to his passions, and was sullied by many crimes, he had some redeeming qualities, and these were now remembered, and his evil deeds forgotten. He was thought of as a brave warrior and a magnificent monarch. That he had been cruel and rapacious could not be denied, but he had only slain his enemies, and confiscated their property—venial offences in the opinion of men who had lived during the sanguinary Wars of the Roses.

The regrets felt for the loss of the king were heightened by fears for the future—great anxiety being felt in regard to the new government. That the queen would attempt to rule in the name of her youthful son, the Prince of Wales, no one doubted; but that she would long maintain sovereign sway seemed very questionable. Unfortunately for herself, Elizabeth had no party, except her own relatives, and certain new-made peers, who were detested by the old nobility, and disliked by the people.

While Edward lived, the queen had been omnipotent, because he granted all her requests, and upheld her family. Deprived of his support, she had little authority. As we just intimated, her brother, the Earl of Rivers, and her sons by her first marriage—the Marquis of Dorset and Lord Gray—

were prominent members of the council ; but Buckingham, Hastings, and Stanley, three most powerful nobles, were hostile to her, and it was certain she would have to contend with Gloucester, whose partisans were already at work, suggesting that she was not lawfully married to the king, and that her sons, being illegitimate, could not succeed to the crown.

Such a prospect did not bode future tranquillity.

Another matter, likewise, occupied the crowd and gave rise to much muttered discussion. The suddenness of the king's death excited suspicion that he had been poisoned at the grand banquet given by him only two days previously ; but by whom, or at whose instigation the deadly poison was administered, none ventured to affirm.

By common consent the queen was entirely acquitted of any participation in the dark deed ; but suspicion attached to Gloucester, who was likely to be the gainer by his royal brother's removal, and who was known to be capable of such an atrocious act.

Amongst those near the catafalque was a Franciscan friar, who had obtained admittance at the same time as Malbouche.

Kneeling down, he appeared to pray fervently for the departed monarch, but was not so much engrossed by his devotions as he seemed. He had contrived to place himself near Buckingham and Hastings, and a good deal of their discourse, though carried on in a low tone, reached his ear. This was what he overheard :

“ Before this hour to-morrow,” said Buckingham, “ the express, whom I ordered to ride for his life, will reach York, and the Duke of Gloucester will be made aware of the king's death. I have written to inform him, and that Rivers, Dorset, and Gray, are certain to dispute his claim, inasmuch as the king, in his latest moments, appointed the queen to be regent, with full powers. I added that unless he can secure the custody of the young king, who is now at Ludlow Castle with

his uncle, Lord Rivers, his highness's chance of the protectorship is irretrievably lost. I told him he might depend on our support, and that we can offer him a corps of a thousand soldiers, well-armed, and ready to march at a moment's notice."

"His highness must not lose time," replied Hastings. "I have ascertained that the queen has despatched a courier to Lord Rivers, with tidings of the king's death, enjoining his lordship to levy troops immediately in Wales, to enable him to conduct his royal nephew safely to London for the coronation."

"Ere the young king can reach London he must be in Gloucester's hands, or we are lost," observed Buckingham, significantly. "But how came Edward to give the queen uncontrolled authority? He always declared that Gloucester should be protector."

"And Gloucester would be protector now," replied Hastings, "had not Mistress Shore induced the dying king to appoint her majesty regent."

"By acting thus injudiciously, Mistress Shore will make a mortal enemy of Gloucester, and gain nothing for the queen," remarked Buckingham.

"To do her justice, I believe her motives were good," said Hastings.

"Now that the king has gone, her power has departed from her," said Buckingham. "But, no doubt, she has enriched herself."

"'Tis her own fault if she has not," rejoined Hastings. "But she is really disinterested, and I incline to think she has not availed herself of the many opportunities offered her of becoming wealthy. However, the influence she enjoyed is gone, as she will speedily discover. Suitors will no longer throng her ante-chamber—courtiers will shun her."

"'Tis a hard fate, I must own, to be raised to such an eminence, and then cast down," observed Buckingham.

“But Mistress Shore can go back to her husband, if he is still in existence.”

“No; that is impossible!” said Hastings. “The crazy goldsmith has not been heard of since his wife left him.”

Just then, perceiving the lord mayor, who had come up in the interim, he said to him:

“Can your lordship inform me what has become of Alban Shore, the goldsmith?”

“That is a question I cannot answer,” replied the other. “Possibly he may now reappear. Should he not do so, we may conclude him dead. But if he still lives he must be poor, for all his money was given away in charities. At one time I envied Shore his good fortune in gaining such a lovely wife, but I have since esteemed myself the luckier man; though had I been in his place I would not have taken her abandonment of me so much to heart.”

“Perchance, you loved her not so well as Shore loved her, my lord,” remarked Hastings. “But she had many suitors besides yourself, I remember.”

“Very true,” replied the lord mayor. “And, strange to say, they were all at the last banquet given by the king—stranger still, they are all here to-day.”

“The party would have been complete had Shore been present on the last occasion,” observed Buckingham.

“Or were he here now,” said the lord mayor. “Mistress Shore has lost none of her beauty. I know not how others feel, but for my own part I confess I am as much in love with her as ever.”

“’Twould have been treason to make this avowal two days ago, my lord,” said Buckingham. “But you may now succeed the king in her favor.”

Before the lord mayor could make any reply, the friar, who seemed disturbed by the discourse, arose from his kneeling posture, and without raising his hood, said, in a hollow voice:

“Alban Shore is not dead !”

“How know'st thou that ?” demanded the lord mayor.

“No matter how I know it,” replied the friar. “I affirm that Alban Shore still lives, but he is not likely to trouble his wife.”

“Thou must give me precise information on this point at a more convenient season,” observed the lord mayor.

“Willingly,” replied the monk.

And bowing his head, he moved to a little distance.

Just then, the Marquis of Dorset came up, and without noticing either of the two nobles, who eyed him haughtily, said to the lord mayor :

“It has just been decided by the council, as no doubt your lordship has been given to understand, that the young king will be proclaimed to-morrow.”

“Orders to that effect have already been given, my lord,” replied the lord mayor ; “and I will see them carried out in person. At noon to-morrow, King Edward the Fifth will be proclaimed at Paul's Cross, at the Cross at Cheapside, and at other public places. 'Tis too soon, as yet, I suppose, to speak of the coronation ?”

“The coronation will take place immediately after the arrival of his youthful majesty in London,” replied Dorset. “As soon as a sufficient escort can be provided, he will commence his journey from Ludlow Castle.”

“I should have thought a very small escort would be required, my lord,” said the lord mayor. “Against whom is his youthful majesty to be defended ?”

“Ay, who are his enemies ?” demanded Hastings, sternly. “Not his brave and loyal uncle, the Duke of Gloucester ; not the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Stanley, or myself, who are all devoted to him, and ready to lay down our lives in his defence. Methinks the guard is required to confirm the power of Lord Rivers, rather than to protect the young king.”

"I care not what you think, my lord," rejoined Dorset, haughtily. "No precautionary measures will be neglected. The queen is well aware that the Duke of Buckingham and yourself are in secret communication with the Duke of Gloucester."

"Does her majesty distrust us?" demanded Buckingham.

"I do," replied Dorset. "Therefore, the young king will have an army to guard him. Forget not that I hold the Tower, and am head of the council, in the absence of Lord Rivers. My lord mayor," he added to that dignitary, "the queen counts upon your loyalty and devotion to the king, her son."

"Her majesty may entirely rely on me, my lord," replied the lord mayor.

With a look of defiance at Buckingham and Hastings, the Marquis of Dorset then moved away.

"I thought a reconciliation had taken place between your lordships and the queen's family," observed the lord mayor.

"We shook hands at the king's request, and vowed to be good friends, and this is the result," rejoined Buckingham. "Your lordship shall have a full explanation anon."

"I require no explanation, my lord," said the lord mayor. "I can see plainly enough what we may expect. My own course is clear. I shall side with neither party, but uphold King Edward the Fifth."

*CHAPTER XI**HOW KING EDWARD THE FOURTH WAS INTERRED IN SAINT
GEORGE'S CHAPEL*

After being exposed for nine hours to public gaze, the royal corpse was removed to a traverse, and robed in a long gown of purple cloth of gold. It was next placed in a large, open coffin, lined with white damask, and laid upon a bier before the high altar.

During the preparation for the latter part of the solemnity, the vast crowd collected within the nave and transepts was constrained to leave the Abbey.

A strange and awful circumstance occurred at the time. Sir William Catesby had been appointed by the lord chamberlain to superintend the removal of the royal corpse. The office was distasteful to him, but he could not refuse it. When he approached, the bearers trembled, for they thought that a frown passed over the dead king's countenance.

Appalled by the occurrence, which he himself had noticed, Catesby drew back, whereupon the king's visage resumed its serene expression.

Catesby was standing aloof, unable to shake off this superstitious terror, when Malbouche came up to him and said, "I trow, Sir William, you have heard of the ordeal of touch?"

"Wherefore the question?" demanded Catesby.

"I would fain see you lay your hand upon the king's body," said Malbouche. "Dare you do it?"

"Certes, I dare! What should hinder me? But I shall not do it to please thee."

"Again, I say, you dare not touch the body," cried Malbouche.

“Thou liest, knave!” exclaimed Catesby.

“To the proof, then!” said the jester.

Catesby stepped forward, with feigned boldness, but secret misgiving.

When he came up to the bier, the king's countenance again seemed to change, and the conscience-stricken villain shrank back.

“Said I not you would not touch the body?” cried Malbouche.

Catesby made no reply.

When the bier sustaining the royal coffin had been placed before the altar, which was lighted up by tall tapers, twenty-four bannerets and knights, in long black gowns and hoods, ranged themselves at the sides to keep watch.

A mass of *Requiem* was then performed by the Abbot of Westminster, while the nobles and gentlemen knelt around. *De profundis* was likewise said. During the office, Lord Dacre offered for the queen; the young Earl of Lincoln, son of the Duchess of Suffolk, Edward's sister, likewise offered; and many others, including Dorset, Buckingham, and Hastings.

The whole psalter was recited, and the solemn service lasted till an hour after midnight, when another mass of *Requiem* was performed.

The coffin was then closed and borne by the bannerets and knights through the choir, to the great porch, where a grand funeral car was waiting to receive it.

While the royal body was placed in the car, the bell of the Abbey began to toll, and a long procession was formed, comprising the monks, the Abbot, the Archbishop of York, who was likewise chancellor, the chief nobles, with the lord mayor, the sheriffs and aldermen.

The funeral train was preceded by a mounted guard of archers, and yeomen of the guard, bearing torches. Beside the funeral car walked the Marquis of Dorset, and the Lords Gray, Dacre, and Lincoln, holding the pall. A long

train of nobles and gentlemen followed, walking two and two.

Seen by the light of the torches, as it shaped its slow course from the Abbey to the palace stairs, where a barge was in readiness to convey the royal corpse to Windsor, the procession formed a most striking spectacle, and, despite the unseasonableness of the hour, was witnessed by an immense number of spectators, all of whom appeared greatly impressed.

The bell of the Abbey continued to toll throughout, but no trumpets were blown, nor was any other sound heard.

Deposited within the barge, which was draped with black velvet, and decked with the royal arms, the king's coffin was watched throughout its nocturnal transit by the bannerets and knights. Tapers burnt at the head and foot of the bier, and priests recited prayers.

With the conveyance thus assigned to the deceased monarch were five other state barges, all filled with various officials.

In the foremost of these, which preceded the royal body by a bow-shot, trumpeters were stationed, and their clarions were occasionally sounded to keep the river clear. The conduct of the ceremonial was entrusted by the queen to her chamberlain, Lord Dacre.

A short halt was made at Shene Palace, where all the royal attendants had come forth, with the seneschal, and loudly expressed their sorrow. But the most genuine manifestation of sorrow was made by Malbouche, who had been allowed by Lord Dacre to accompany the body of his royal master.

In the gray light of dawn, the royal corpse arrived at Windsor, and was at once conveyed to Saint George's Hall, where it lay in state for three days.

Subsequently, the king was interred in Saint George's Chapel, the funeral obsequies being conducted with great pomp.

A lady, attired in deepest mourning, whose features were completely concealed by a thick veil, was conducted by Lord Dacre to a place within the chapel not far from the royal body.

This lady, who was evidently overwhelmed by affliction, knelt down, and remained in a supplicating posture till the close of the ceremonial, when she was assisted from the chapel, almost in a fainting state, by the queen's chamberlain.

BOOK V

THE ABBEY SANCTUARY

CHAPTER I

HOW JANE DEVOTED HERSELF TO THE QUEEN

Nearly a week had elapsed since Edward the Fourth was interred in Saint George's Chapel at Windsor.

Jane had been present at the funeral, as described ; but on her return that night to her apartments in Westminster Palace, she was seized with a violent illness, that threatened to deprive her of life or reason.

Owing to the sedulous care of Doctor Lewis, the late king's physician, she recovered ; and on the sixth day, though still feeling very weak, she was able to sit up.

Then, for the first time, she assumed her mourning habits ; and these being of black velvet, edged with white silk, and embroidered with silver, contrasted strongly with the unwonted paleness of her complexion. But, though bearing evident traces of deep affliction, her features appeared almost more interesting than they had done before this heavy blow had fallen upon her.

She was alone, and seated in a cabinet, communicating with a larger apartment, in which she had often sat with the king, and was thinking of him, and of the many happy hours they had passed together.

Alas ! these happy hours were gone—never to return ! Deprived of him she had so deeply loved, she felt that life would henceforth be a blank ; and she resolved to bury her woes in a convent, and seek to atone, by penance and prayer, for the faults she had committed.

She was still occupied by sad reflections—still thinking of the king—when a page entered, and said that a Franciscan

friar was without, and prayed admittance, as he had somewhat of importance to communicate to her.

A feeling of misgiving crossed her at this announcement, but she ordered that the friar should be admitted.

When he came in, his hood was drawn over his face, so as to conceal his features, but she knew who it was.

As soon as the page had retired, the friar took a parchment from his gown, and placed it on the table beside her.

As he did this, he said to Jane, who watched him in surprise :

“Here is the warrant for ten thousand marks given you by the king.”

Without a word more, he was about to depart, but Jane stopped him.

“My errand is done,” he said. “I would rather answer no questions.”

“Yet tell me, I pray you, by whom the warrant was taken, and with what design?” she cried.

“I took it not—let that suffice!” rejoined the friar.

“My suspicions alight on Alice Fordham,” cried Jane. “Did she take it?”

“Question me not, I repeat!” he said. “Thus much I will tell you freely. It was taken from vindictive motives, and not from desire of gain.”

“What you say convinces me it was taken by Alice Fordham,” rejoined Jane. “But I am perplexed to understand how the paper came into your hands!”

“No matter how I obtained it!” said the friar. “But for me, the warrant would have been destroyed. If you desire the money—and ten thousand marks is a large sum—I counsel you to apply for it without delay to the Marquis of Dorset, keeper of the late king’s treasure, or he may not be able to pay the amount to you. The Duke of Gloucester, who is no friend of yours, may prevent him!”

“The Duke of Gloucester!” exclaimed Jane, in alarm.

"Is he in power? I pray you tell me! All news has been kept from me during my illness, so that I really know nothing."

"Gloucester will soon be lord protector—rest assured of that!" rejoined the monk. "The young king is in his hands, and he is bringing his royal nephew to London for the coronation."

Astounded by the intelligence, Jane sank back, and the friar quitted the room.

Shortly afterwards Doctor Lewis came in, and she eagerly questioned him.

"Is it true," she said, "that Lord Rivers has given up the young king to his evil-hearted, treacherous uncle, Gloucester? I cannot believe it!"

"'Tis true, nevertheless," rejoined the physician.

"And where is Buckingham?" cried Jane.

"With the Duke of Gloucester!" was the reply.

"I knew it!" cried Jane. "I knew he would be art and part in the treacherous scheme. And Lord Hastings—where is he?"

"In London, with the council," replied Doctor Lewis. "But he is hostile to the queen."

"Ay, he and Buckingham are her majesty's implacable enemies," said Jane. "Oh, that I could help her in this emergency, when she has such powerful foes to contend with! Is her son, Lord Gray, with her?"

"Lord Gray was made prisoner by Gloucester at the same time as his uncle, Lord Rivers," replied the physician. "He had been sent to Ludlow Castle with a letter from the queen to her brother, bidding him dismiss all the young king's guards, and hasten to London with only his usual retinue. Lord Rivers imprudently complied with the injunction. Leaving all his armed men behind him, he set forth with his two nephews, the young king and Lord Gray, and a score of attendants. The hypocritical Gloucester, who had prepared

this scheme by writing a submissive letter to the queen, was waiting for them with a thousand men at Northampton. Lord Rivers and Lord Gray unsuspectingly fell into the snare; and accepting an invitation, brought them by Buckingham from the wily Gloucester, took the young king to Northampton, where they passed the night in festivity. Next morn, the two confiding nobles were arrested by their treacherous host, and sent, under a strong guard, to Pontefract Castle; while Gloucester, having fully succeeded in his design, seized upon his royal nephew."

"Unless the young king can be torn from the clutches of that remorseless tiger, he will be destroyed," cried Jane. "Gloucester has now made one successful step, and will never rest till he has mounted the throne. All hindrances will be swept aside by him. But the crown must be preserved for Edward's sons. Hear me, gracious Heaven!" she ejaculated, falling on her knees before a crucifix placed on one side of the room. "Grant, I implore Thee, that I may be the humble instrument of saving this young prince from the great peril by which he is threatened! Grant that my efforts, inspired and directed from above, may avail to preserve for him his father's crown, which a usurper would snatch from his brow! Grant, O Heavenly Power! that I may be enabled to accomplish this; and when the task I desire to undertake is finished, I hereby solemnly vow to devote the remainder of my life to Thy service!"

Uttered with an earnestness and fervor that left no doubt of the sincerity of the supplicant, this prayer produced a strong effect upon a person who had entered the cabinet at the very moment when Jane knelt down, but would not come forward, being unwilling to interrupt her.

It was a tall, stately dame, of a very commanding presence, habited in magnificent mourning. On her brow was a white frontlet that covered her beautiful tresses, and on the lower part of her face was a plaited linen covering, called

a barb. Though her noble features looked sorrowful, it was sorrow mingled with pride and anger.

As soon as Jane became aware of the presence of her august visitor, she arose and made a profound obeisance to her.

"I have come to you in my distress," said the widowed queen, "and have heard enough to convince me that you will serve me and my sons, so far as lies in your power."

"That I will, gracious madame," replied Jane, earnestly. "I will lay down my life for you and them!"

"There is no one but yourself with whom I can take counsel, and on whom I can rely," pursued the queen. "I am deprived of the help of my brother, Lord Rivers, and of my sons, the Marquis of Dorset and Lord Gray. Rivers and Gray are prisoners, and Dorset cannot quit the Tower at this terrible juncture. Doubtless you are aware of the grave fault I committed in ordering Lord Rivers to dismiss the escort he had provided for the young king. But for that fatal error my son would now be here, and, with him in my own keeping, I should be able to set my enemies at defiance. The step taken by Gloucester is only part of a plan, the end of which is the destruction of all my children."

"Such is my own opinion, madame," observed Jane, mournfully.

"We are not safe within the palace," pursued the queen, "since I have no guard to defend me, should an attempt be made—as is most likely—to seize upon my second son—the Duke of York. Whither shall I fly?"

"I have advised her majesty to take refuge with her children in the Abbey Sanctuary," observed Doctor Lewis. "But she hesitates, lest it should seem she is alarmed."

"The measure, though repugnant to your feelings, is absolutely necessary, gracious madame," urged Jane. "Yourself and your children will then be secure, for even Gloucester will not dare to violate a sacred asylum, the privileges of which

have been recognized for centuries by popes and kings. Therefore you will be far safer in the Abbey Sanctuary than if you took refuge in the Tower with your son, the Marquis of Dorset, or in any other strong castle, where you might be besieged. Moreover, while you have the young Duke of York with you, the king is safe, for if the elder brother be put to death, the younger becomes king."

"You have convinced me," said the queen. "I will take all my children at once to the Sanctuary. Nor will I stir thence till this danger be past."

"You have well resolved, madame," said the physician, approvingly.

"If you do not disdain my services, gracious madame, I would offer to accompany you," said Jane, "and I may be able to render you some little assistance. I will bring with me all the money and jewels I possess. They are yours."

"You make a great sacrifice," said the queen; "and I fully appreciate it. I accept the offer, because I may need money, and I have little, and can obtain none from the Marquis of Dorset."

"Here is a warrant for ten thousand marks," said Jane, pointing to the paper. "Will it avail your majesty?"

"'Tis useless now," said the queen; "yet keep it—better days may come."

"For me no better days can come," rejoined Jane, mournfully. "I have no desire left save to see your majesty and your children righted. When that happens—as with Heaven's grace it will happen—I shall have done with the world."

"Rejoin me in the Sanctuary," said the queen. "Bring with you such attendants as you need, and all matters you require. I will now go and give orders to my own servants to prepare at once for the removal."

"I will attend to your instructions, madame," said Jane, making a profound obeisance to the queen, as her majesty withdrew.

Seeing that Jane looked scarcely equal to the effort, the physician promised to return and help her, as soon as he had attended the queen to her apartments.

CHAPTER II

HOW THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK BROUGHT THE GREAT SEAL TO THE QUEEN

“I make it known to all generations of the world after me, that, by special commandment of our holy father, Pope Leo, I have renewed and honored the holy church of the blessed apostle, Saint Peter, at Westminster. And I order and establish forever, that any person, of what condition or estate soever he be, from wheresoever he come, or for what offence or cause it be, if he shall take refuge in the said holy place, he be assured of his life, liberty, and limbs. Moreover, I forbid, under pain of everlasting damnation, that any minister of mine, or of my successors, shall intermeddle with any goods, lands, or possessions of the said persons taking the said sanctuary. For I take their goods and livelihood into my special protection, and, therefore, grant to every and each of them, insomuch as my terrestrial power may suffice, all manner of freedom and joyous liberty. And whosoever shall presume or do contrary to this my grant, I ordain that he lose his name, worship, dignity and power. And I will that this my grant, endure as long as there remaineth in England either love or dread of Christian name.”

Such were the terms of the charter whereby the great privilege of sanctuary, originally granted to the Abbey Church of Westminster by Sebert, King of the East Saxons, was confirmed by Edward the Confessor in the middle of the eleventh century.

From that date to the period of our story, the privilege continued in full force, and endured long afterwards, until its gross abuse necessitated entire suppression.

Nor was the privilege of sanctuary confined merely to the Abbey, but extended to its precincts, within which the Abbot's Palace was included.

In this large monastic mansion, then some three centuries old, the unfortunate queen was lodged.

Registered, with all her children, according to the customary form, as sanctuary persons, she was now safe. It was not the first time she had been compelled by adverse circumstances to seek an asylum in the Abbot's Palace. Indeed, the young king, her son, was born there, in 1470, when Edward was driven from the kingdom by Warwick.

Seated in a large stone hall, panelled at one end with oak, and hung with arras, the queen was watching her serving-men, who had been busily engaged throughout the night in bringing chests, coffers, and other articles to the Sanctuary.

The torches that illumined the hall showed a great quantity of chests and household stuff piled on the floor, and also revealed the sad figure of the queen, as she sat there alone.

Neither children nor attendants were with her. The young Duke of York and the five princesses, his sisters, had long since retired to rest. Jane, also, who had followed the royal lady to the Sanctuary, and had stayed with her to a late hour, rendering all the assistance she could, had at last yielded to fatigue, and was now slumbering in a chair in another part of the hall.

The queen would not quit her post, but sat there throughout the night, noting each chest as it was brought in and laid down before her.

She was wrapped in a black velvet robe ; and her splendid tresses, being unbound, streamed over her shoulders.

On the table near which she sat were a lamp and a missal ; but her eyes seldom rested on the book of prayer.

Thus the night had passed—one of the weariest and saddest nights the queen had ever spent—and dawn was close at hand, when a noise outside roused her from the apathetic state in which she had sunk, and filled her with alarm. Who but an enemy could come there at that hour?

It was not an enemy, however, but a friend. It was the Archbishop of York, who was likewise lord chancellor, that entered the hall.

The palace of the archbishop adjoined the Abbey, so he had not far to come. Short, however, as was the distance, he brought with him several armed attendants, and it was the noise they made, while stationing themselves at the door of the hall, that had alarmed the queen.

An officer of the archbishop's household followed his grace, carrying a purple velvet bag, embroidered with the royal arms.

On recognizing her visitor, the queen arose, and received him with as much dignity as if she had been in her own palace.

"I did not think to see your grace at this hour," she said. "But you are always welcome, and never more welcome than now, for I am sure you come to me as a friend."

"I bring you news that I trust will give you comfort, madame. Not half an hour ago I was wakened from my sleep by a messenger from Lord Hastings, who told me that your majesty need be under no apprehension, for all would yet be well. Thereupon, I attired myself in haste, and came hither with the message."

"And does your grace attach credit to it?" cried the queen. "I believe nothing that comes from Hastings. He is my deadly enemy, and seeks to destroy me and my children. He thinks by these false messages, sent through a friend so loyal and true-hearted as your grace, that he will induce me to quit this asylum, and place myself in Gloucester's power, but I will disappoint him. Here I will stay

until the king, my son, is crowned, and invites me to come forth from my refuge."

"I do not counsel you to leave the Sanctuary, gracious madame," rejoined the archbishop. "But I think you judge Lord Hastings harshly. I admit he is not your friend, but he was devoted to the king, your husband, and his zeal and attachment are now transferred to the young king, your son. Rest assured he would not harm your children."

"He is the chief accomplice in this plot with Gloucester to deprive my son of the crown," said the queen. "He has selected your grace as his messenger, because he knows the great confidence I have in you, and the great respect in which I hold you. But tell him that I doubt him—nay, more, that I know him to be false and treacherous. Bid your attendant retire for a moment, for I have something to say to you in private."

At a sign from the archbishop, the officer retired to a short distance, so as to be out of hearing.

"What would you say to me, madame?" asked the archbishop.

"I believe Gloucester will kill the king, my son," she rejoined, in a low, deep voice.

"I cannot penetrate Gloucester's designs, madame," rejoined the archbishop; "but the dark deed would avail him little. Were the king, your son, murdered to-day, to-morrow I would crown his brother, the Duke of York."

"I see your grace is truly loyal," cried the queen.

"Your majesty shall have unquestionable proof of my fidelity," said the archbishop.

Then, signing to the officer to come forward, he bade him place the embroidered velvet bag upon the table.

"Lo! there, madame," said his grace,— "there is the Great Seal of England, the badge of regal power, without which nothing of moment in state affairs can be done. The king, your husband, gave me the seal, and I hereby return it to you.

Keep it for King Edward's sons, and secure their right. Could stronger proof of my loyalty and devotion be given, I would give it."

"My lord, you have done enough," replied the queen, in accents of heartfelt gratitude. "You have raised fresh hopes in my breast. With Heaven's aid I shall yet triumph over my enemies."

"Doubt it not, gracious madame," replied the archbishop. "It glads me that I have brought consolation to your anxious breast. Seek some repose, I entreat you. You need it much. Later on in the day, we will confer together again. Till then, farewell."

"I pray your grace to give me your blessing ere you go," said the queen.

And as she bent down, the archbishop stretched his arms over her, and exclaimed fervently :

"Heaven bless your majesty, and guard you and your children from all ill !"

As the queen arose, he quitted the hall with his attendant.

No sooner was he gone than the queen clapped her hands.

The sound awoke Jane, who sprang from the chair on which she had slept, and flew towards her.

"What would your majesty ?" she cried.

"Bring that bag to my chamber. It contains the Great Seal of England."

"Is the seal for your younger son ?" asked Jane.

"Time will show," replied the queen.

CHAPTER III

THE ABBOT OF WESTMINSTER

Jane occupied a small chamber situated in the upper part of the Abbot's Palace, and looking down upon a beautiful little flower garden adjoining the inner court.

Being greatly fatigued, she did not rise till late, and had just attired herself, when, hearing voices beneath, she went to the window, which had been thrown open by her attendant.

On one side of the secluded little garden rose the gray monastic mansion—on the other, the buttresses and pinnacles of the Abbey.

A more charming retreat cannot be conceived, and in it the abbot was wont to spend many hours in each day, but he now left it to the queen and her family.

In this little garden, shut round by high stone walls, but still trim, and well kept, the royal children were collected.

Apparently the youthful captives were not much cast down, for their voices sounded cheerfully, and occasionally a light laugh was heard.

On looking forth, Jane perceived the Duke of York playing with his younger sisters, and chasing them along the narrow gravel walks.

Near a sun-dial, placed in the centre of the trim parterre, stood the Princess Elizabeth and the Princess Cicely. The countenances of both these lovely damsels had a sad expression.

All the party were in mourning.

Jane watched the scene with great interest—an interest deepened by the anxiety she felt for the safety of the young prince, who seemed unconscious of any danger.

After sporting with his younger sisters for some time, the Duke of York came up to the two princesses standing near the sun-dial, and asked them if they would not play with him.

Both declined, and told him he had had sufficient pastime.

“I would the king, my brother, were here to play with me!” he said.

“I would he were, for then he would be out of the power of our cruel uncle, the Duke of Gloucester,” remarked the Princess Elizabeth. “I fear we shall never behold our dear brother again.”

“Should Gloucester kill him, I shall be king, and then I will put Gloucester himself to death,” cried the young duke.

“It would be far better if we could find some means of delivering Edward from our uncle’s power,” said the Princess Cicely.

“Why does not Edward try to escape, and come to us?” cried the Duke of York.

“The attempt would be useless. He is too strictly guarded,” replied the Princess Elizabeth. “Take care you never get into our uncle Gloucester’s hands, Richard, or he will shut you up in the Tower.”

“He cannot force me hence!” said the young duke. “And the lord chancellor has given the queen the great seal, without which nothing can be done.”

“Alas! the lord chancellor has sent for it back!” said Elizabeth.

“But surely the queen refused to give it up?” cried the young duke. “I would not have returned it.”

“Her majesty judged otherwise, and she knows best,” said Elizabeth, sadly. “But be it for good or ill, the great seal is gone.”

This was news to Jane, and it greatly distressed her. She

could neither account for the queen's imprudence, nor understand why the Archbishop of York should have acted thus.

But she was much more alarmed by what presently occurred.

The young duke and his sisters had resumed their play, when the Abbot of Westminster, attended by three or four monks, entered the garden.

On seeing him, the Duke of York immediately stopped in his sport, and made the abbot a low reverence.

"I am sent to conduct your highness to the queen, your mother," said the abbot. "The Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury is with her majesty."

"My mind misgives me, holy father!" interposed the Princess Elizabeth. "Methinks the cardinal has come to take away my brother!"

"'Tis true, princess," rejoined the abbot.

"But I will not go with him," cried the Duke of York, resolutely.

"What the queen, your mother, enjoins, your highness will do, knowing it to be for the best. Of that I am firmly persuaded," said the abbot. "Your royal uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, having been appointed protector by the council, and having the care and guardianship of the king, deems it improper that two brothers, hitherto brought up together, should be separated, and he has therefore sent to the queen demanding that you be delivered up, and brought to the king your brother, who is most wishful to have you with him. Your highness will then be at liberty, whereas you are now in prison, and the lord protector and the council hold it dishonorable to the king and to yourself that you should continue to remain in this sanctuary."

"I will answer for my brother, holy father!" said the Princess Elizabeth. "It can be no dishonor to the king or the Duke of York that the duke should be with his mother, and in an asylum where he is safe from his enemies. Would

to Heaven the king, my brother, were with us! I should then feel far easier than I do now!"

"My errand, princess, is to conduct the duke to the queen," replied the abbot. "If you and the princesses, your sisters, choose to come with us, you will learn her majesty's decision."

With this he took the young duke's hand, and led him out of the garden.

The Princess Elizabeth and her sisters followed—all looking very sad, and the three youngest weeping.

The monks brought up the rear of the little procession.

Guessing whither they were going, Jane hurried down a circular stone staircase, and reached the great hall before them.

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE QUEEN DELIVERED UP THE DUKE OF YORK TO CARDINAL BOURCHIER AND THE LORDS

At the upper end of the large chamber, which was still encumbered with chests and household goods, sat the queen.

Her majesty was conferring with Cardinal Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was accompanied by Lord Howard, and several other nobles.

The cardinal had a very imposing presence, the effect of which was heightened by his rich attire and hat. His person was large, and his features strongly marked and characterized rather by pride than benignity.

A long and angry discussion had taken place between his eminence and the queen, in which the cardinal, partly by persuasion, partly by menace, strove to induce her to deliver up her son.

“Madame,” said the cardinal, finding it impossible to move her, “I am but a messenger, with these lords, to ascertain your pleasure. You have branded us all with disloyalty and treachery, and have imputed a most execrable design to the lord protector. For ourselves, we can avouch that we are loyal and true to the young prince, your son; and we dare avouch, also, that the lord protector is equally true to his royal nephew, and means him no harm by removing him from this sanctuary, and placing him with the king, his brother, but much good. Madame, I have done, and pray you to come to a speedy decision.”

These words, and the tone in which they were uttered, produced a great effect upon the queen, and shook her firmness.

She knew not how to act for the best. She did not for a moment believe that the cardinal and the lords with him, though hostile to herself, would be accessory to the destruction of her son; but she feared the protector.

Still, if Gloucester were resolved to violate the Sanctuary, and take away the young duke by force, she could not prevent him. Since opposition would be useless, she judged it the wisest course to yield.

At this painful juncture, the abbot entered the hall with the young duke, followed by the princesses.

On beholding her son, the queen immediately arose, and went to meet him.

Disengaging himself from the abbot, the prince flew towards her. She caught him in her arms, and covered him with kisses.

“You will not let them take me away, dearest mother?” he said.

She strained him to her breast; and the young duke, becoming alarmed, repeated the question.

“There is no help. You must go, my sweet son,” replied the almost heart-broken mother. “Were I to keep you here, the lord protector would take you hence by force.”

“I did not expect this,” murmured the duke.

The young princesses had now come up, and hearing what the queen said, gathered round their brother.

“Since you must go, we will go with you,” they said.

“No, no; stay with the queen, our mother, and comfort her,” rejoined the duke. “Distress not yourself on my account, dearest mother,” he added, to the queen. “Perhaps no harm may happen to me.”

“Thy youth and innocence ought to guard thee, my sweet son,” said the queen. “Bid farewell to thy sisters.”

The young duke then tenderly embraced them all; and the scene was so touching, that even the cardinal and the lords, though well pleased that their mission was accomplished, were moved by it.

“Something tells me we shall not meet again on earth, sweet brother,” said little Bridget, as she kissed the duke; “but we shall meet in Heaven.”

The queen had need of all her fortitude to sustain herself at this trying juncture.

Taking her son by the hand, she led him towards those who were waiting for him.

They bowed as he approached; and the young prince gracefully returned the salutation, bending with especial reverence to the cardinal.

“My lord cardinal, and you, my lords,” said the queen, “I now deliver my son to your keeping. I am confident of your fidelity to him; for I know you will not betray the trust reposed in you by the king, his father. Before Heaven and man, I shall require my son again at your hands.”

Howard and the other lords made no reply to this address, but simply bowed. Cardinal Bouchier, however, who was much moved by it, said, “Rest easy, madame. I will answer for your son’s safety.”

She then turned towards the young duke, and after regarding him for a few moments with inexpressible affection, kissed him, and said:

“Farewell, my beloved son! All good angels guard thee! Let me kiss thee again ere we part, for Heaven only knows when we shall meet again!”

Once more she pressed him to her heart—once more she kissed him, and blessed him fervently.

But the young prince clung to her, and besought her not to send him away.

Gently detaching his hold, the agonized mother delivered him to Cardinal Bouchier, who advanced to take him from her.

Unconscious that they were conducting the youthful victim to be sacrificed by his blood-thirsty uncle, who was waiting for him in the Star Chamber, the lords rejoiced at their success, and cared nothing for the unhappy queen's anguish.

Just as he was about to quit the hall, the young Duke of York looked back, and beheld his mother, with her eyes streaming, and hands clasped, and looking the very picture of despair. His sisters were gathered round her.

He bade them farewell in his heart, and it was a last farewell.

CHAPTER V

HOW THE MARQUIS OF DORSET TOOK REFUGE IN THE SANCTUARY

Three days after the removal of the young Duke of York, another event occurred calculated to heighten the unhappy queen's anxiety.

The Marquis of Dorset, her eldest son by her first husband, who had hitherto filled the high offices of Constable of the Tower and Keeper of the Royal Treasures, sought refuge in the Abbey Sanctuary.

When he presented himself to the queen, she refused to embrace him, and reproached him bitterly with deserting his post, telling him he ought to have held the Tower to the last.

“So long as that fortress was in our power, there was hope for us,” she said. “Now there is none.”

“Hear how I have been circumstanced, ere you condemn me, madame!” replied Dorset. “Within the last two days I have lost all control in the Tower. Deprived of my offices by Gloucester, who has seized upon the royal treasures, and appropriated them to his own use, I could not enforce obedience from the men composing the garrison, and had I not been concealed in the Wardrobe Tower by a servant who continued faithful to me, and who subsequently enabled me to escape, I should have been lodged in a dungeon, and ere long brought to the block. Even when I got out of the Tower I was not safe, for the river swarms with barks filled with armed men, on the lookout to arrest our partisans, and prevent any of them from gaining this sanctuary.”

“Ah! dear son, I no longer blame you,” cried the queen. “Heaven be praised, you have escaped! From what you say, I conclude Gloucester is now in the Tower?”

“He occupies the palace with his retainers,” replied Dorset, “and acts as if he were invested with supreme authority, as you may judge, when he styles himself, ‘Brother and Uncle of Kings, Protector and Defender, Great Chamberlain, Constable and Lord High Admiral of England.’ While I was hidden in the Wardrobe Tower, I learnt that the king, your son, and his brother, the Duke of York, are shut up by the usurper in some private apartments of the palace, where none are allowed to see them.”

“Alas! alas!” exclaimed the queen. “I much fear they will never come forth again!”

“I can offer you no comfort, madame,” said Dorset, “for I share your worst fears. Both your sons are now completely

in Gloucester's power, and it is not likely he will part with his prey."

"Have we no friends left to help us in this dire extremity?" cried the queen. "The king was adored in the city. Will not the citizens rise to defend his sons?"

"Madame, as I understand, the whole city of London has been greatly troubled by these occurrences, and many loyal citizens took up arms, demanding that the young princes should be shown to them; but they were prevailed upon by Hastings, who has much influence with the lord mayor and the aldermen, to retire to their own homes. Thus all hope of assistance from that quarter is at an end."

"Hastings has ever been my enemy!" cried the queen. "Next to Gloucester himself, I fear him most."

"And with good reason," said Dorset.

At this juncture, Doctor Lewis entered the hall. He seemed surprised to find the Marquis of Dorset there, and expressed his great satisfaction at his lordship's escape from the Tower.

"I will frankly confess that I never thought to behold you again, my lord!" he said; "for I am well aware that Gloucester intended your destruction, and I marvel you have been able to escape from him. You are more fortunate than your brother, Lord Gray, and your uncle, Lord Rivers."

"What of them?" cried the queen, anxiously. "Nay, do not hesitate, good doctor. I have had so many griefs of late, that I am able to bear more."

"I thought the sad news must have reached you, madame, or I should not have spoken of it," said the physician. "Thus, then, it is. Sir Richard Ratcliff, whom you know to be a great favorite with Gloucester, and ever ready to execute his master's behests, has entered Pontefract Castle, at the head of a large party of men, and seized upon Lord Rivers, Lord Gray, Sir Thomas Vaughan, and Sir Richard Hawse."

"I guess what follows," said the queen.

"Without trial, without sentence," pursued the physician,

“they were dragged into the outer court, where their heads were stricken off in the presence of a vast number of spectators, who were told they were traitors, and had conspired with the queen to destroy the Duke of Gloucester and his cousin, the Duke of Buckingham, and the old royal blood of the realm.”

“My brother and my uncle slain!” cried Dorset. “Where will this bloodthirsty tyrant stop?”

“Not till he has slain us all!” said the queen. “My turn may come next, or yours, my son! Heaven only knows! I thought I could bear the weight of any fresh calamity that might fall upon me, but my strength fails me. Support me to my chamber, Dorset, and do you come with me, good master physician, for I may need your aid.”

She then quitted the hall, leaning upon her son, and attended by Doctor Lewis.

CHAPTER VI

BY WHOM JANE WAS INDUCED TO QUIT THE SANCTUARY

On the same day, but at a later hour, Jane was in the Abbey cloisters, and was pacing to and fro, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, when she became aware that some one was approaching, and, looking up, she beheld Lord Hastings.

After respectfully accosting her, he said :

“Till this morning I was not aware you had taken refuge in the Sanctuary. Had you consulted me I should have advised you to remain in your apartments in the palace. Here you are shut out from all the enjoyments of life, and from all pleasant intercourse with your friends. In effect, you are

a prisoner, since you cannot stray far beyond these cloisters. Let me take you hence. I have interest enough with the lord protector to shield you from all harm, and save your property from confiscation."

"I doubt not your offer is made in good faith, my lord," she rejoined, "but the protector can do me little injury. I care not for the confiscation of my goods. I have more money with me than I need. I shall never again take part in the gaities and pleasures of the world, so that to be shut up here is no punishment to me. As speedily as may be, it is my intention to retire to a convent."

"I might applaud your resolution," said Hastings, "if I thought you were called upon to sacrifice yourself thus. But I see no reason for it. So far from your charms being on the wane, you have not yet reached the meridian of your beauty. When your grief has abated you will reappear, looking more lovely than ever. No, madame, it must not be. The disappearance of a star so brilliant would leave a blank in the firmament."

"My lord," she replied, coldly, "all you can say will fail to move me."

"Yet listen to me!" he said, assuming a more ardent manner. "Circumstances compel me to avow my feelings sooner than I intended. The charms you would bury in a convent have produced a great impression upon me. I love you passionately—nay, I have long loved you, though, during the king's lifetime, I controlled my passion. Now I can speak freely. From me you will meet with the same devotion you met with from Edward—more, perhaps—for I will live only for you. Again I pray you, let me take you back to the palace, which, as I have said, you ought never to have quitted."

"No, my lord," she replied; "I will never leave this place, except, as I have told you, for a convent."

"This is madness!" cried Hastings, unable to control his

impatience. "As your friend, I am bound to prevent you from carrying this fatal resolution into effect. You are too young, too fair, too captivating, to retire from the world at present. Come with me."

"Hold, my lord!" said Jane, as if struck by a sudden idea. "Before I consent to return with you to the palace, I must have your promise that you will act as I desire."

"I will do whatever you enjoin," he replied.

"You pledge your knightly word to this?" she said.

"I do," he replied, earnestly. "Are you now content?"

"I am content to trust you," she rejoined.

"Come, then!" he cried, hurrying her along the cloister.

They had not proceeded far, when the queen, attended by the Marquis of Dorset and Doctor Lewis, issued from the ambulatory on the right.

For a moment, her majesty looked as if she doubted the evidence of her senses; but as Jane stopped to address her, she said, in a haughty tone, "Pass on!"

"Grant me a word, madame, ere I depart," said Jane.

"What!" exclaimed the queen, in increased astonishment.

"Are you about to quit the Sanctuary?—and with Lord Hastings?"

"She is, madame," replied Hastings. "She is already wearied of it."

"Dismiss me not unheard, gracious madame," said Jane.

"I shall be able to satisfy you——"

"I am already satisfied you have deceived me," said the queen; "and no explanation you can give will induce me to change my opinion. With the powerful friend you have secured, 'tis needless to remain in this asylum. Lord Hastings will protect you."

"I have already promised to do so, madame," said Hastings.

"A word will convince you of the injustice you do me, madame," said Jane.

“Hear what she has to say, I beseech you, madame!” said Doctor Lewis, struck by Jane’s manner.

“Speak, then!” said the queen, haughtily.

On this, the others moved away to a short distance, leaving Jane and the queen together.

“My motive for leaving this asylum is to serve you, madame,” said Jane.

“Serve me! How?” cried the queen.

“I know not in what way, madame, for I am acting on a sudden impulse; but I am persuaded I can be more useful to you if I am at liberty than here. Should I fail in my endeavors, hold me excused; for you may be sure my heart is with you.”

“Enough!” said the queen. Then, lowering her voice, she added, “If you can win over the Lord Hastings, you will do me infinite service.”

“It is in that hope that I leave you, madame,” replied Jane. “I have his promise. And now, farewell, madame. You shall soon hear from me, and by some faithful messenger.”

With a low reverence to the queen, she then joined Lord Hastings, who had watched her narrowly during the interview.

From the cloisters they proceeded to the great hall, where Jane found one of her servants, and gave directions that the household goods she had brought with her should be taken back to the palace.

The outer gate of the Sanctuary was kept constantly closed, and a strong guard placed at it to prevent any attempt to violate the asylum. Lord Hastings had been allowed admittance, but his attendants were compelled to remain outside.

Jane’s heart smote her as she passed through the gate, but she felt she must now go on. Fate forced her to quit the Sanctuary, and rush upon her doom.

Followed by his attendants, Lord Hastings conducted her to the palace.

All had been thrown into confusion by the queen's sudden flight, but Jane's apartments were undisturbed.

Having put her in possession of them, and given orders that the same attention should be paid to her as heretofore, Lord Hastings retired.



BOOK VI

LORD HASTINGS

CHAPTER I

SHOWING THE PERFIDY OF ALICE FORDHAM

A few days after her return to the palace, Jane, to her great surprise, received a visit from her former confidante and companion, Alice Fordham.

Highly indignant, she was about to order the intruder's instant departure; but Alice threw herself on her knees, and made so many protestations of regret for her conduct, that at length Jane forgave her, and allowed her to remain.

"I have behaved infamously to you, Jane," said the treacherous friend; "but I know the goodness of your heart, and therefore ventured to present myself to you. I shall hope I may be able to serve you."

"I never wanted a friend more than now, Alice," said Jane; "and if you are sincere in your professions of regard, you can materially assist me."

"I have come with that intent," said Alice. "I hope I shall be able to free you from your worst enemy, the lord protector."

"You promise too much, Alice," remarked Jane. "He is beyond your reach."

"'Tis possible that a mortal blow can be dealt by an unseen hand," said Alice.

"What mean you?" said Jane, looking at her inquiringly.

"You have heard that a waxen figure can be prepared by certain strong enchantments, in the likeness of an enemy whom we would destroy—so that, as the image melts, our enemy will perish."

"I have heard of such a thing," replied Jane; "but I

have no faith in it. Nor, if I believed in the sorcery, would I employ it."

"Here is an image of the lord protector," said Alice, producing a small waxen figure. "You may know whom it represents by the high shoulders, and even by the features. I bought it from a witch, by whom it was made, and who assures me it will prove effectual. Pins are struck to the heart, as you see. Try it."

"No," replied Jane; "I will not resort to witchcraft to rid myself of an enemy."

"You are more scrupulous than the queen," said Alice. "She and her mother, the Duchess of Bedford, notoriously practised enchantments, and it has even been said that you yourself brewed philters to enthrall the king."

"You could contradict that idle talk, Alice," said Jane.

"Yes; I know the sole magic you practised proceeded from your own fascinations; but I have heard some credulous people affirm that you retained your power over the king by spells. These persons declare you are now employing the same arts upon Lord Hastings. 'Tis needless to defend yourself to me. I am well aware that Lord Hastings has been long enamored of you."

"Lord Hastings never dared to breathe a word of love to me till after the king's death," said Jane; "and he is quite aware that his suit is hopeless."

"Is that so?" remarked Alice, sceptically. "Report affirms the contrary. 'Tis said that Lord Hastings has induced you to quit the Sanctuary, and has promised to defend you against all your enemies, even against the lord protector."

"That is true," replied Jane. "Lord Hastings has shown himself a devoted friend, but nothing more. I did not encourage his suit, and he desisted. Since I returned to the palace, I have only seen him twice."

"You will see him to-day," said Alice.

“How know you this?” asked Jane.

Alice smiled significantly.

“You will find I am right,” she said. “I perceive you are not inclined to take me into your confidence, and I will not ask it. But I am not to be duped.”

“I cannot allow this freedom, Alice,” said Jane, coldly. “Our former familiarity must not be renewed. I am not in the mood for idle discourse.”

“Is that a hint you would have me go?” said the other.

“My spirits are not good. I am best alone,” rejoined Jane.

“You expect Lord Hastings, and want to be rid of me,” said Alice. “Nay, the remark was made in jest.”

“Such jests are not to my taste,” said Jane, sharply.

“Certes, you are much changed,” rejoined Alice. “But no wonder! The precariousness of your position naturally makes you feel uneasy. We shall meet again sooner than you expect, and then you may regret that you have not been more gracious to me. Adieu!”

During the foregoing colloquy, Alice had contrived to slip the wax figure into a small coffer that was standing on the table.

The treacherous act was unperceived by Jane.

CHAPTER II

HOW JANE WAS ARRESTED, AND TAKEN TO THE TOWER

Later on in the day, Lord Hastings made his appearance.

He looked greatly preoccupied; and after a greeting had passed between him and Jane, he said to her, “I am sorry I induced you to quit the Sanctuary, and advise you to return

thither. I may no longer be able to protect you. If Gloucester persists in his present course, I shall be compelled to declare against him; and Lord Stanley, the Archbishop of York, and the Bishop of Ely have come to a like determination. Not only are we denied access to the young king and the Duke of York, but we find they are allowed very few attendants; while the lord protector has an unusual number of retainers, not only at the Tower, but at Crosby House, where he entertains the lord mayor and the citizens. The coronation, which ought to take place soon, is again postponed. All this convinces me that the lord protector has some ill design."

"Doubt it not, my lord," observed Jane. "He means to seize his nephew's crown."

"That he shall never do, while I can wield a sword," said Hastings. "I will lay down my life in defence of King Edward's sons. If remonstrances fail, I will resort to sterner means. To-morrow, at the meeting of the council, I shall demand that the two princes be brought before us; and if the protector refuses compliance, I will slay him with my own hand. Buckingham, also, must die. Thus only can the safety of the young princes be secured."

"Have I permission to impart your design to the queen, my lord?" said Jane.

"Breathe it not to anyone!" replied Hastings. "Absolute secrecy is required. Gloucester is excessively vigilant, and has a multitude of spies."

Just then he fancied he heard a sound, and, suddenly starting up, he raised a fold of arras.

But, quick as was the action, the listener was gone, if there had been one there.

"'Twas a false alarm," he said, as he returned. "Had I been overheard, my plan would have been ruined, and I should lose my head. Having explained to you the perilous game I am playing, I will now take my departure. Should

success crown my attempt, we shall soon meet again. If not, we part forever. Meanwhile, follow my advice, and return to the Sanctuary."

For some time after the departure of Lord Hastings, Jane continued occupied in anxious reflection, for she could not disguise from herself the extreme hazard of the attempt.

She then summoned a female attendant, and directed her to pack up a few articles of wearing apparel, and some other matters that she wished to take with her to the Sanctuary.

These preparations were soon made, and the handmaiden had just brought in a little valise containing the articles in question, when the door was thrown open, and, to Jane's great alarm, Sir William Catesby entered with an officer.

Half a dozen halberdiers could be seen standing in the gallery outside.

"Madame," said Catesby, "I have a disagreeable duty to perform. I am sent by the lords of the council to arrest you, and convey you to the Tower."

"With what offence am I charged, sir?" she demanded.

"With conspiring, by certain magical practices, to injure and destroy the lord protector," replied Catesby.

Jane then saw the imprudence she had committed in holding any converse with Alice Fordham, but she unhesitatingly replied, "The charge is false."

"I hope it may turn out so, madame," said Catesby. "My injunctions are to make search for anything tending to prove your criminality."

He then signed to the officer, who proceeded at once to the table, and after a moment's pretended search, opened the coffer and discovered the wax figure.

Taking it forth, he brought it to his leader.

"Here is proof against you, madame," said Catesby. "There can be no doubt that this is an image of the lord protector."

"And equally certain that its object is maleficent," said the officer.

"'Tis a plot against my life, contrived by Alice Fordham," cried Jane.

"You must convince the council of that," said Catesby.

"I do not expect to convince them," returned Jane, "because they are prejudiced against me, and ready to decide as the lord protector may enjoin."

"Such language will not serve you, madame," said Catesby. "You must now to the Tower with me. You are at liberty to take a female attendant with you, and any apparel you may require."

"I am ready to attend you, sir," said Jane. "That trunk contains all I need. You will go with me, Miriam," she added, to her handmaiden, who was weeping bitterly.

"I will go with you to death, madame," replied Miriam.

"Nay, I trust all will go well," said Jane. "Thou canst prove that I practise no magic arts."

"I can, madame," said the handmaiden, earnestly.

Jane and her attendant were then conducted by a private way to the palace stairs, where a covered boat was waiting, in which they were conveyed to the Tower.

Arrived there, Jane was at once taken to the large chamber in the White Tower, where the Council was sitting at the time.

CHAPTER III

HOW JANE WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE LORD PROTECTOR
AND THE COUNCIL

In that unrivalled hall, in the uppermost story of the White Tower, where consultations on matters of import to the state were then held, the chief members of the Council were assembled.

From the massive wooden pillars supporting the roof of this vast and lofty apartment, heavy tapestry of a sombre hue was hung, so as completely to surround the council table, and prevent the discussions there carried on from being overheard by any but privileged officers.

At the head of the council board sat the lord protector, magnificently robed.

On his right was the Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury; on the left the Archbishop of York. The Duke of Buckingham, the Bishop of Ely, Lord Stanley, and several other nobles were present, but Lord Hastings did not occupy his customary seat at the table.

Before these personages Jane was brought by Catesby and the officer, after being led through a long gallery filled with armed men; and when she looked around, and saw the stern countenances fixed upon her, her heart sank, and she felt ready to faint.

By a great effort, however, she recovered her composure, and after making a profound reverence to the council, waited to be interrogated.

“Bring the woman somewhat nearer to me!” cried the lord protector, in a stern voice.

And as the order was obeyed, and Jane came forward, he said :

“Art thou not afraid to look me in the face, after the grievous bodily harm thou hast done me?”

Nothing daunted by his fierce glances, Jane replied :

“I can regard you steadfastly, my lord, and declare before Heaven that I have never injured you.”

“Let this sight confound thee, then!” he cried, drawing up the sleeve of his doublet, and displaying his left arm, the skin of which was shrivelled, and yellow as parchment. “This mischief has been done me by thy enchantments, and had I not discovered the cause, my whole body would have been wasted and dried up.”

A slight murmur pervaded the assemblage.

“My lord,” said Jane, firmly, “the king, your brother, told me that your left arm was thus blighted from your birth, and several here present must be aware of the circumstance. His Grace of Buckingham can testify to it if he will.”

“I have heard the lord protector say that his arm had become strangely shrunken of late,” observed Buckingham; “and I told his highness that the injury must be caused by witchcraft.”

“Ay, and thou art the witch who hast wrought the mischief!” cried Gloucester, casting a severe look at Jane. “I suspected thee, because I know that by philters and love-potions the king, my brother, was held in thy power.”

“Were King Edward living, you had not dared to accuse me thus, my lord,” replied Jane, courageously. “He would have defended me from the false charge!”

“Thy effrontery is matchless, but it will not avail thee,” said Gloucester. “Proof can be given of thy magic practices.”

“It can, my lord,” observed Catesby, pressing forward. “This figure of your highness, evidently prepared by sor-

cery, and pierced to the heart by pins, as you see, has just been found in a coffer in Mistress Shore's room."

All glances were directed towards the figure, which was laid on the council table by Catesby.

"This figure, you say, was found in Mistress Shore's room, Sir William?" demanded Gloucester.

"Scarce two hours ago, my lord," replied Catesby.

"They who hide can find," said Jane. "She by whom the figure was fabricated placed it where it could not fail to be discovered. 'Tis a device to destroy me."

"Contrived by whom?" said Buckingham.

"By Alice Fordham," replied Jane.

"Alice Fordham is here," observed the duke. "Let her be brought before us."

Alice was introduced; but though she maintained a bold deportment, she did not look towards Jane.

Questioned by the Duke of Buckingham, she denied that she had hidden the magic figure, but asserted that Jane had shown it to her, and declared that by means of it she could destroy the lord protector.

By this statement, which was very confidently made, a certain impression was made on the council.

It must be remembered that at this time a belief in witchcraft was universally entertained, and few were free from superstition.

"You swear to the truth of what you have stated?" said Buckingham.

"Solemnly," replied Alice. "I have long known that Mistress Shore is a sorceress. Moreover, a far greater lady has been her associate in these dark practices."

"Dost hint at the queen, mistress?" demanded Gloucester. "Speak plainly."

"Your highness has said it," replied Alice.

"'Tis utterly false," cried Jane. "This monstrous accusation will obtain credit from no one."

“I credit it!” thundered Gloucester. “I believe that thou hast conspired with my brother’s wife to destroy me by witchcraft, since she can reach me in no other way. With this wicked intent didst thou join her in the Abbey Sanctuary, and there thy malignant spells were wrought.”

“I care not to defend myself, my lord!” said Jane. “Believe me guilty if you will, but I will lift up my voice for the queen, since none other in this assemblage will speak for her. If she could subtly and certainly have destroyed your highness, as you assert, would she have delivered up her youngest son to you? Would she not rather have waited the result of the secret blow? The lord cardinal, and other lords here present, witnessed her anguish, and know that she never expected to behold her son again. Would she have had this fear if she had felt certain of your destruction? I trow not.”

“I’ll hear no more!” cried Gloucester, impatiently. “I cannot reach your partner in crime, but I will have you burned as a witch.”

“I pray your highness to suspend your judgment,” interposed Lord Stanley. “The witness against this unhappy lady is utterly unworthy of credit. She is actuated by vindictive feelings, and has herself been guilty of criminal practices, as I will show. Bring in that monk who waits without,” he added, to the officer.

Immediately afterwards a Franciscan friar was introduced. His cowl was thrown back, so that his pallid features could be seen.

On his appearance a manifest change was produced in Alice’s demeanor, but Jane looked wistfully at him.

“What hast thou to state respecting Alice Fordham, father?” demanded Lord Stanley.

“I could state much as to her falsehood and treachery towards her generous friend,” replied the friar. “But it may suffice to say that she stole from Mistress Shore a warrant for ten thousand marks, and intended to appropriate the

amount to herself, but I forced her to give up the money, and took it back to its rightful owner."

"'Tis a large sum!" exclaimed Gloucester. "It cannot all have been spent?"

"None of it has been spent by me, my lord," replied Jane, to whom the question was addressed. "The whole sum has been handed over to the queen."

"My lord," said Lord Stanley, "we are all agreed that no credit can be attached to the evidence of Alice Fordham, and our sentence upon her is imprisonment for the offence she has committed."

"As yet we know not the name of her accuser," said Gloucester. "How art thou called?" he added, to the friar.

"In bygone days I was known as Alban Shore," replied the monk.

The answer caused general astonishment.

"Then thou art this woman's husband!" said Gloucester. "Dost thou not ask for her punishment?"

"No, my lord!" replied Shore.

"But she *shall* be punished," cried Gloucester; "if not for sorcery, for incontinency! Take her hence," he added, to the officers. "Lodge her in some prison within the Tower, till I see fit to deliver her to the Bishop of London for punishment."

"What is to be done with Alice Fordham, my lord?" inquired Catesby.

"Let her likewise be imprisoned," replied the lord protector.

Ere she was removed, Jane looked towards Shore, and found his gaze fixed compassionately upon her.

CHAPTER IV

PRESAGES OF ILL

On that day Lord Hastings did not attend the council at the Tower, but remained in his magnificent mansion on the banks of the Thames, and occupied himself in preparations for the morrow.

He did not retire to rest till late, but about an hour after midnight he was roused from his slumbers by an attendant, who told him Lord Stanley was without, and desired immediate speech with him.

Surprised and alarmed, Hastings sprang from his couch, and, putting on a loose gown, caused his untimely visitor to be introduced.

The expression of Lord Stanley's countenance prepared him for some direful communication.

"I have had a remarkable dream to-night," said Stanley, "and it has produced so strong an effect upon me that I have come to relate it to your lordship. It concerns you as well as myself.

"Methought we were hunting the wild boar in a forest that was entirely strange to me. The huntsmen were gone, and the hounds had fled. Both our horses were killed, but we continued the chase on foot. Suddenly the boar turned upon us. We struck him repeatedly with our spears, but he appeared invulnerable. After a short conflict you were trampled beneath the infuriated animal's feet, and I saw his tusks pierce your side. You were bathed in blood. In vain I strove to assist you. I was thrown down likewise, and gored, and, with a sharp pang, I awoke."

“How do you interpret this dream?” remarked Hastings, after a brief pause.

“Thus, my lord,” replied Stanley. “The wounds and blood signify danger of life to both of us. The boar is Gloucester’s cognizance, and plainly denotes from whom the danger is to be apprehended. I shall not remain within his reach. I have ordered my horses, and shall set out forthwith to join my friends in the North, and I counsel your lordship to come with me, and place yourself in safety.”

“I thank you for the warning,” said Hastings, “and though I own the dream is most surprising, and well calculated to cause alarm, it does not give me much uneasiness, nor will it turn me from my purpose. Instead of goring us, the boar, I hope, may be slain. But if you have any misgiving, I would not have you stay. Take horse as you design, and depart forthwith. You must, however, consider that your sudden flight will rouse suspicion, and unless the boar be struck to the heart he may find means of goring you, even at a distance.”

“I cannot shake off my fears,” said Stanley. “Nevertheless, I agree with you that flight may not ensure safety, but perhaps endanger it, and I will, therefore, tarry for the council to-morrow.”

“’Tis the best and boldest course,” said Hastings. “You may be of infinite service to the young king. Let all your retainers wait for you on Tower Hill ; they may be needed.”

Stanley then departed, and Hastings returned to his couch ; but not to sleep, for he had been made restless by this nocturnal visit.

Next morning, after he had breakfasted, he was preparing to set out for the Tower, and intended to take with him a large party of armed men, and leave them outside the fortress, when Sir Thomas Howard, son of Lord Howard, and a member of Gloucester’s cabinet, made his appearance, and interfered with the plan.

On inquiring why Sir Thomas had come at such an early hour, Hastings was told that he had been sent by the lord protector.

“His highness feared that your lordship might not attend the council to-day, and having important business to despatch, he ordered me to fetch you.”

“I will follow shortly,” said Hastings.

“Nay, my lord; I will wait,” rejoined Sir Thomas. “His highness bade me bring you.”

Finding he could not get rid of his troublesome visitor without causing mistrust, Hastings gave some private orders to his men, and set out on horseback with his enforced companion.

Sir Thomas had two grooms with him, and they appeared extremely watchful. As Lord Hastings rode past Blackfriars, his horse stumbled, and again in Eastcheap, and on the second occasion the rider was nearly thrown.

“Were not your lordship the most fortunate of men, I should say these mischances are unlucky,” observed Sir Thomas.

Hastings made no reply; but continued thoughtful till they approached the Tower.

On looking towards the spot where he had enjoined Stanley to station his men, he could not perceive them, nor did he see any concourse of citizens as he had expected. If a crowd had been collected on Tower Hill, it must have been dispersed.

But he was still further discouraged when, on reaching the barbican, he found the guard doubled, while the outer walls were thronged with armed men.

Not without misgiving did he cross the drawbridge, and pass through the gate.

On inquiry, he learned that Lord Stanley had already arrived, and that the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Ely had just landed at Tower-stairs, and proceeded to the council chamber.

Every precaution to repress a tumult seemed to have been taken. A company of archers was drawn up in the lower ward, and a large party of arquebusiers was collected in the inner court.

Had any discovery been made? This Hastings wished to know, yet feared to ask. The preparations he beheld convinced him that his project must be abandoned.

Having dismounted near the Garden Tower, Hastings was marching with his companions towards the palace gate, when he was stopped by a Franciscan friar, who besought a word with him in private.

“What would you, holy father?” inquired Hastings.

“Turn back, if it be possible, my son,” replied the monk, in a low voice, calculated not to reach the ear of Sir Thomas Howard, who was standing at a little distance. “I would have warned you, but I have not been able to quit the Tower.”

“’Tis too late to turn back now, good father, even if there be danger,” rejoined Hastings. “But why are these preparations made?”

“The lord protector suspects some plot against himself, my lord,” replied the monk.

“Ha! Is it so?” cried Hastings.

“Know you what happened yesterday?” inquired the monk.

“Speak! Keep me not in suspense!” said Hastings.

“Mistress Shore was arrested and imprisoned in the Beauchamp Tower,” replied the friar.

“Mistress Shore imprisoned!” exclaimed Hastings. “I thought she had returned to the Sanctuary. With what crime is she charged?”

Before the monk could make any reply, Sir Thomas Howard interposed and said:

“My lord, I doubt not the lord protector is impatiently expecting you. You cannot have much to say to this holy

man. You have no occasion for a priest *as yet!*" he added, significantly.

"Then you think I may need one presently?" observed Hastings.

"Nay, my lord; I said not so," rejoined Sir Thomas.

"Act on the hint, good father, and wait," said Hastings.

CHAPTER V

HOW LORD HASTINGS WAS BEHEADED ON TOWER GREEN

On entering the council chamber, Hastings found all the members assembled—the only seat vacant being his own, which was situated at the upper end of the table, on the left of the lord protector.

"Soh! you are come at length, my lord?" cried Gloucester, in a fierce tone. "You have kept us waiting!"

"I trust I have caused no needless delay, my lord," replied Hastings. "I learn that the council has not yet been called upon to deliberate on any matter of import. Before we proceed further, I have a proposition to make, to which, I persuade myself, your highness will incline a favorable ear. Of late, there have been many disquieting rumors within the city of London, which have produced great agitation among the populace, as your highness must be aware; but these murmurs can be speedily quelled, if the young king be taken from the Tower, where, methinks, he has been too long shut up, and shown to his loving subjects. I, therefore, propose that such a course, which, for the reasons I have given, I deem highly judicious, be adopted, and that the young king and his brother, the Duke of York, be forthwith exhibited to the citizens."

“We do not deem it expedient to carry out your suggestion, my lord,” said Gloucester. “Our royal nephews are safest within the Tower, and we shall not suffer them to go forth, even at your earnest solicitation.”

“But will not your highness listen to the recommendation of the council?” said Hastings.

“The vote of the council has not yet been taken, my lord, and would be against you, I am persuaded,” rejoined Gloucester. “But why this sudden change of opinion? Till now you have judged it best that the young king should remain secluded, with his brother, till the coronation. Have you been instigated to make this request by the queen? If so, I can understand the motive.”

“I have held no communication with the queen, my lord,” replied Hastings. “Her majesty has no liking for me, neither have I any affection for her.”

“But you have conspired with Mistress Shore, who is in the queen’s confidence.”

“Your highness wrongs me!” cried Hastings.

“You have conspired, I say, with that sorceress against my life!” roared Gloucester. “Had not your treasonable design been revealed to me, I should infallibly have been your victim. Your purpose was to stab me where I sit, and next bathing your steel in Buckingham’s life-blood, to seize upon the two young princes. ’Tis useless to deny it, for there is one here who overheard you.”

“Who is my accuser?” demanded Hastings.

“I am, my lord,” replied Catesby, stepping forward. “Learn, to your confusion, that I was behind the arras when you disclosed your design to Mistress Shore!”

“Now thou seest how I became acquainted with thy villainy!” cried Gloucester.

“Your purpose was to slay the lord protector and the Duke of Buckingham at the council table, and then take upon you the government of the young king and the kingdom,” pur-

sued Catesby. "But Heaven would not suffer such an evil scheme to prosper."

"Dost thou hear, traitor?—dost thou hear?" cried Gloucester.

At this juncture, several members of the council, who had hitherto been kept silent by astonishment and alarm, rose to their feet.

Gloucester, however, would allow no interference, but struck his hand violently twice or thrice upon the table.

At this signal, several halberdiers rushed in, and, by the lord protector's orders, seized Hastings, who offered no resistance.

Lord Stanley, however, came to the assistance of his friend, but received a severe wound in the head, and fell beneath the table. By the direction of Catesby, who conducted these proceedings, the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Ely were next arrested, and these measures caused the greatest consternation among the council.

"What shall be done with this heinous offender, my lord?" said Catesby, pointing to Hastings, who remained in custody of the guard.

"I will not ask my life," said the ill-fated noble, with dignity. "I am well convinced your highness will not spare me, either for old friendship or for service rendered you."

"Thou hast forfeited all claim upon me," rejoined Gloucester, in an inexorable tone. "Take him forth," he added. "Let him make a short shrift, if he will. By Saint Paul, I will not dine till I have had his head!"

The unfortunate Hastings was then hurried away, lest his looks should excite compassion among the members of the council.

Dragged by his guards along the gallery at the side of the council chamber, he was forced down a spiral stone staircase to the guard chamber, whence, without even allowing a mo-

mentary halt, he was taken forth upon the green, and led towards Saint Peter's Chapel.

Catesby, with his sword drawn, marched at a little distance behind the doomed man, but not a word passed between them.

Close to the sacred edifice lay a log of wood, intended for repairs. Beside this piece of timber, and showing that some preparations had been made for the execution, stood two figures. These were the Franciscan friar with whom Hastings had recently spoken, and the headsman.

The latter, who was leaning upon his axe, was a strongly-built, savage-looking personage, with brawny arms bared to the shoulder. He wore a buff jerkin and a leather apron, and had a leather cap on his head.

"Make the most of your time, my lord," said Catesby, advancing. "Many minutes cannot be allowed you."

He then retired; and Hastings threw himself at the feet of the monk, who held the crucifix towards him.

"Have you aught to confess to me, my son?" inquired the monk.

"Alas! good father," cried Hastings, "had I as many hours left as I have minutes, I could not enumerate half my sins!"

"Do not despair, my son," replied the monk. "Do you forgive all your enemies, even him who has brought you to this terrible strait?"

"Even him," replied Hastings; "and I pray earnestly that all those I have injured may forgive me."

"Since your repentance, though late, is deep and sincere, I grant you absolution," replied the monk. "By the power derived from holy Peter, I will loose and deliver you from all your sins, known and unknown, mortal and venial. Wherefore, raise up your heart to Heaven! Accept of the penance of death as due to your sins, and trust in Divine mercy."

"I do so implicitly, father," replied Hastings, fervently. "May Heaven be merciful to me, a sinner!"

"Amen!" exclaimed the monk.

“Are you ready, my lord?” observed the headsman, receiving an impatient sign from Catesby. “Time grows short.”

Divesting himself of his richly-embroidered mantle, Hastings threw it on the ground.

“Take that as thy fee, fellow!” he said.

“Kneel down, my lord!” said the grim headsman, pointing to the rude block.

Hastings obeyed, and his head was stricken off by a single blow.

A cry from a window in the Beauchamp Tower showed that Jane had witnessed the terrible incident.

“Wrap this ghastly relic in a napkin,” said Catesby to the headsman, “and take it to the lord protector. He has sworn not to dine till it be brought him!”

BOOK VII

THE PENANCE



CHAPTER I

OF THE ATTEMPT MADE BY DORSET TO DELIVER THE YOUNG PRINCES FROM THE TOWER

The death of Hastings, and the imprisonment of Lord Stanley, the Archbishop of York, and the Bishop of Ely, struck such terror into the few remaining adherents of the young princes, that no further attempt was made to oppose Gloucester's daring design.

The crown was shortly afterwards publicly offered him by Buckingham, before a large assemblage, at Baynard's Castle, and accepted with feigned reluctance, amid shouts of "Long live Richard the Third!"

The treasures amassed by his royal brother were next seized upon, and appropriated to his own use, or bestowed on his favorites.

The ceremonies prepared for his nephew were destined to serve his own turn, and the usurper's coronation took place, with great splendor, in Westminster Abbey.

But though he had attained the summit of his ambition, he could not feel secure while his nephews lived. Some rising would infallibly be made in their favor that might hurl him from the throne, and set up Edward the Fifth in his stead. Already, Buckingham, who had helped to raise him, was discontented, and no more formidable leader of a rebellion could be found.

The pretext would infallibly be, "King Edward's children." That cry must never be heard. It was useless to shut up his nephews in the Tower. They would escape, or be set free. No: they must be removed by death, as all others who stood in his way had been removed. But the

manner of their death must be mysterious and inexplicable. None, save the perpetrators of the deed, must know how they perished.

Having formed his fatal determination, the usurper resolved to carry it out. To this end he deemed it best to absent himself for a while from London, hoping by such means to avoid suspicion ; and he therefore set out on a progress to York, and journeyed as far as Gloucester, where he halted, the distance from London being suitable to his wicked design.

Meanwhile, his intended victims continued prisoners in the Tower, and occupied two or three rooms situated at the rear of the palace, and looking upon the Privy Garden.

All their pages and attendants had been dismissed, and only one person, Dighton, the warder, was allowed to wait upon them.

Subdued by this harsh treatment, the young King Edward the Fifth, as he had once been styled, almost, it now seemed, in mockery, became very melancholy, and neglected his attire, and, though he uttered few complaints, it was evident he was pining away.

The little Duke of York, however, managed to keep up his spirits, and endeavored to cheer his brother ; but not even his lively sallies could bring a smile to Edward's pale face.

One day, when the unfortunate young prince was seated in a large arm-chair, in a listless posture, and looking very pensive and very sad, the Duke of York came behind him, and, putting his arms round his neck, said :

“ Prithee, tell me your thoughts, sweet brother.”

“ I was thinking how much happier I should be if I had not been born a prince, Richard. Had I not the misfortune to be a king's son, I should be at liberty—able to do as I please, and go where I list. I should provoke no man's jealousy. And thou, sweet brother, art equally unfortunate.”

“ I would not renounce my birthright if Gloucester would set me free on that condition,” rejoined the Duke of York.

"Do not despair, brother; you may yet sit upon the throne."

"Never!" replied Edward. "I shall never reign, nor wilt thou! We are doomed. The sins of our fathers will be visited upon us. Listen to me, brother," he continued solemnly. "All the descendants of Edmond Langley, chief of the House of York, have died a violent or premature death. Our great-grandsire, Edward, Duke of York, was slain at the battle of Azincourt. Richard, Earl of Cambridge, his brother, lost his head upon the scaffold. Our grandsire, Richard, Duke of York, and his son, Edmond, Duke of Rutland, perished at Wakefield. Our uncle, the Duke of Clarence, was murdered here in the Tower. The king, our father, died before his time; and, 'tis said," he added, lowering his voice, "that he died by poison. Shall we escape Divine vengeance—we, who belong to the fourth generation? I fear not, brother—I fear not!"

"But we have committed no crime!" said Richard.

"Our fathers have sinned, and we must suffer, as I have just pointed out," rejoined Edward. "We ought not to repine."

"Nevertheless, I find the confinement in these rooms very irksome," observed Richard. "I would get out of the Tower if an opportunity offered. But we are too closely watched by Dighton. He will not even let us take exercise in the Privy Garden, or in the court. He says it is against the king's order. Why, you are the king, brother!"

"Alas! no; I am deposed," said Edward.

"If Gloucester is an instrument of Heaven, he must be a scourge," observed Richard. "But I think he is an agent of the Prince of Darkness. When the king our father lived, Gloucester did not dare raise his hand against us, and now he treats us thus infamously. But we will repay him."

"Peace, brother!" cried Edward.

"I cannot hold my peace. I am too greatly incensed,"

rejoined Richard. "I would tax Gloucester with cruelty and treachery to his face, if he came near us."

"Have a care, brother!" said Edward, as a noise was heard at the door. "Here comes Dighton with our repast."

"Dighton is the tool of a tyrant!" cried Richard, determined that the warder should hear him.

But it was not Dighton who entered.

It was a tall young man, habited precisely like the warder, but much taller, and differing in feature and manner. He brought with him a basket containing a few eatables and bread, which he placed on the table.

While he was thus occupied, the two young princes stared at him, as if doubting the evidence of their senses.

At length they both sprang towards him, calling out, "'Tis Dorset—our brother Dorset!" and flung themselves into his welcoming arms.

Yes; it was the Marquis of Dorset in that strange disguise.

"You need not be told that I have ventured here in the hope of liberating you," said Dorset, as soon as he had extricated himself from their embrace. "If Heaven prospers my undertaking, you shall both be out of Gloucester's power to-night."

"So soon!" exclaimed Richard, clapping his hands joyfully.

"Calm yourself, brother!" said Edward. "Let us hear Dorset's plan."

"The attempt would never have been made but for the queen's entreaties," said the marquis. "But I could not resist her prayers, and yesterday ventured forth from the Sanctuary on this perilous errand. At the very onset there was danger, for the Sanctuary is now surrounded by armed men, to prevent all egress and ingress; but I escaped. After making all needful arrangements for your flight, I contrived to gain admittance to the Tower, and, by promise of a large reward, purchased the assistance of your attendant, Dighton.

I have thus gained access to you. To-night a boat will be outside the Tower wharf, waiting to carry off two fugitives. You will both, I trust, be on the wharf at midnight—will both be placed on board the boat, and conveyed in safety to Westminster—and thence, despite all difficulties, to the Sanctuary, where you will be clasped to the queen's anxious breast."

"That thought gives me fresh energy," said Edward. "I never hoped to behold the queen and my sisters again. But how are we to reach the wharf, my lord?"

"I will conduct you thither," replied Dorset. "Hold yourselves in readiness for my appearance. At the appointed hour I will come to you; and then, if all goes well, you shall be quickly free from constraint, and as quickly restored to the queen!"

"Heaven deliver us from our uncle Gloucester! That shall be my fervent prayer to-night!" said Richard.

Bidding them be careful what they said to Dighton, should the warder visit them, Dorset then took his departure.

CHAPTER II

HOW THE ATTEMPT FAILED

As may well be supposed, the intervening hours seemed to pass very slowly with the youthful prisoners—especially with the Duke of York, whose disposition was exceedingly impatient. They did nothing but talk of the queen and the princesses, their sisters, and of the expected joyful meeting with them. Alas! it was destined never to take place.

In the evening, Dighton brought them supper, and lighted their lamp, and they thought he regarded them wistfully, but

in compliance with Dorset's injunctions, they did not address him, and he soon went away.

Nothing further occurred. After awhile, they grew tired of talking, and Richard fell asleep on his brother's shoulder, and slumbered on thus till near midnight, when Edward, who had counted the hours by the bell, thought it best to wake him.

Scarcely had he done so, when the door opened, and Dorset came in.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Quite ready!" they both replied.

After extinguishing the lamp—for Dorset being well acquainted with the place, did not require a light—they went forth, and tracked a long, dark corridor.

No guard appeared to be stationed there, nor could any light be seen, or sound heard. But Dorset easily discovered a short spiral staircase communicating with the Privy Garden.

Taking a hand of each, Dorset then led them noiselessly across the garden. Fortunately, the night was profoundly dark, so there was small chance of discovery.

Presently, they came to a postern constructed in the high stone wall surrounding the garden, and Dorset having cautiously unlocked this door, they issued forth into the outer ward, almost opposite the Cradle Tower.

Again the darkness screened them from the observation of the sentinels, if there were any on the walls.

At that time a vaulted gateway connected with the tower just mentioned, led to a narrow drawbridge, which was defended by a strong iron gate.

Through the instrumentality, doubtless, of Dighton, the little drawbridge was now lowered, and the gate open, and in another minute the youthful princes and their conductor had crossed the moat, and were standing safely upon the wharf, with the darkling river flowing past them.

At last they were out of the Tower, and escape seemed now certain.

Richard could hardly repress his transports of delight, and even Edward felt elated.

They all flew to the edge of the wharf, resolved not to lose an instant in springing on board; but how dreadfully were their expectations crushed when no boat could be descried!

Dorset still hoped the boat would come. But the risk of discovery would be infinitely increased by delay, and he looked back in terror, and listened anxiously for any alarming sound from the walls.

Again he plunged his gaze into the darkness—hoping, praying, that the boat might appear. But it came not.

A slight fog hung upon the river, and this added to the obscurity. Sounds were heard in the distance, but nothing could be distinguished.

During this severe trial, the sensations of the unfortunate young princes almost amounted to agony, but they uttered no reproaches.

Edward stood quite still, though trembling in spite of himself; but Richard seized Dorset's hand, and said:

“Brother, do not let them take us back to the Tower!”

“What can I do?” rejoined Dorset, distractedly. “What can I do?”

Just then a sound was heard that annihilated all hope, if any had remained.

The alarm bell was rung in the palace, and shouts resounded along the walls.

Almost instantaneously, as it seemed, torches were brought to the summit of the Traitor's Tower, and these cast a lurid light upon the river, and disclosed the youthful fugitives standing upon the wharf, while loud shouts arose from the guard, who were armed with arquebuses. They did not fire, for they had recognized the young princes; but they ordered them not to stir.

At the same time, armed men, provided with torches, could be seen hurrying through the archway of the Portcullis Tower

into the outer ward, and shouts were exchanged between this party and the arquebusiers on Traitor's Tower, from which the former learnt that the fugitives were on the wharf, whereupon Sir Robert Brakenbury, who was with the party, hastened in that direction.

Seeing that capture was inevitable, Dorset consulted for a moment with the young princes, who approved his design, and bidding them, as it proved, an eternal adieu, he ran to the edge of the wharf, and plunged into the river.

Surprised by this desperate step, the arquebusiers, who took him from his garb to be a warder, instantly fired, but none of the shots took effect, and he swam rapidly down the current.

Next moment, Sir Robert Brakenbury, followed by a dozen halberdiers, appeared on the wharf.

It was a very affecting sight as the young princes surrendered themselves to the lieutenant. Brakenbury made few observations at the time, putting no questions to them as to their escape, and forbore even to ask the name of the individual who had plunged into the river.

Very respectfully, and with a sad expression of countenance, he conducted the princes back to their apartments in the palace, deferring all investigation until the morrow, and only giving orders that the guard should be doubled.

CHAPTER III

IN WHAT MANNER THE YOUNG PRINCES WERE PUT TO DEATH IN THE GARDEN TOWER

King Richard the Third was at Warwick Castle when he received intelligence of the attempt to liberate the young princes, and he resolved no longer to delay their destruction.

Already he had sent a confidential messenger to Brakenbury with a letter enjoining him to make away secretly with the prisoners, but the lieutenant refused to obey the order.

Richard was therefore obliged to find another agent, and after some consideration, he chose Sir James Tyrrel, one of his retinue, whom he knew to be bold and unscrupulous.

Tempted by the promises of immediate reward and future preferment, Tyrrel accepted the dreadful task without hesitation, and set out at once for the Tower, furnished with an order from the king to the lieutenant.

On his arrival, he had a private conference with Brakenbury.

The lieutenant again refused to be accessory to any secret murder, and said :

“ My soul revolts against the deed, and if I could prevent it I would ; but I am powerless, as you know. On your head, and not on mine, be the blood of these innocents ! ”

Tyrrel did not seem to heed the abhorrence with which his fell design was regarded by the lieutenant, but prepared to execute the king's mandate.

Dighton, the warder, who still attended on the princes, having contrived to satisfy the lieutenant that he had no hand in the recent attempt to escape, appeared a fitting instrument for the business, and proved to be pliant.

With him was associated Miles Forrest, who had been concerned in the murder of the Duke of Clarence, and these two miscreants undertook a deed from which all others shrank.

Within the last few days, by an order received from the king, the unfortunate princes had been removed—for greater security, it was said, but it may be for other reasons—from the palace to the Garden Tower, as the structure was then styled—though it subsequently acquired a far more terrible designation, which still continues attached to it.

Beneath this tower yawns a low-browed archway, once protected by a massive gate at each end, and by a strong portcullis.

Immediately above the arch, and reached by a short circular stone staircase, is a room in which the portcullis is worked; and this gloomy chamber and the ponderous defensive machine—though the latter is no longer used—are still in pretty nearly the same state as heretofore.

It was in the upper part of this structure that the two princes were confined on their removal from the palace.

A small chamber was assigned them, containing a bed and one or two chairs, with another still smaller room adjoining it.

Nothing could be more dismal than the appearance of these cells—for such they were, in effect. The mullioned windows were strongly grated like those of a dungeon. The massive door of the little bed-chamber was constantly locked and bolted at night by Dighton, and there was another strong door below to shut off the portcullis room, which was reached by a separate staircase.

The bed-chamber window looked upon the inner ward, and upon the White Tower; but it was placed too high up to be easily reached, and the youthful captives never gazed out from it.

Since the failure of their attempt at flight, they had become completely disheartened. Even Richard had lost his

Jane's Forgiveness and Expiation

A thrill passed through her frame as he stood beside her. His hood was thrown back, and the moonlight revealed the pallid countenance of Alban Shore.

Copyright 1900 by S. B. Harris & Co.



spirit. But as calamity pressed upon them, their brotherly love strengthened, and served to support them.

Convinced they had not long to live, they strove to prepare for death. No priest visited them—no one whatever was allowed to come near them, except Dighton, and his manner was now exceedingly morose.

But they had a missal, given to Richard by the queen, which proved an inexpressible comfort to them. They read it together continually, and while they were thus employed, their hearts seemed lightened. Often did they wish they could pass away quietly while occupied in prayer.

Ever since they had been immured in this cell, a change had gradually taken place in their looks. Their features had now a sweet, resigned, almost angelic expression, which they wore to the last.

Their discourse was no longer of earthly matters, but of celestial joys, in which they hoped to participate.

“Heaven, in its mercy, will soon take us hence,” said Edward, “and then we shall be free from all care. Our sufferings, I trust, will serve as an atonement for such sins as we have committed. Do you forgive all our enemies, Richard?”

“All, except our cruel uncle,” replied the little Duke of York. “Him I cannot forgive.”

“But you must forgive even *him*!” said Edward, gravely.

“I will try to do whatever you enjoin me, brother,” said the duke. “But this is beyond my power. I have not told you of the dream I had last night.”

“I had a dream, likewise,” said Edward. “Let me relate mine first. Methought this prison-chamber opened, and we were wafted away by angels.”

“My dream was precisely similar,” observed Richard. “What do such visions portend, brother?”

“A speedy death,” replied Edward. “Perchance to-night!”

Richard heard the explanation without a tremor.

"I thought so," he said; "and, therefore, I did not mention my dream before."

"I shall lay my head upon the pillow tranquilly," said Edward, "hoping I may awake in Heaven."

"And so shall I, brother," said Richard.

That night, at a late hour, the door of the cell was opened, and two dark figures could be seen standing outside, one of whom held a lamp.

Despite the noise caused by drawing back the bolts, the gentle sleepers did not wake. They were lying close together, and Richard's arms encircled his brother's neck. From their looks they might be dreaming of Paradise.

Touching as the picture was, it moved not the ruffians who contemplated it.

But as they seemed to pause, a stern voice was heard from the stone staircase, commanding them to proceed with their work.

The foremost ruffian then stepped forward, and plucked the pillow from beneath the heads of the sleepers.

Even then the princes did not stir, though Richard sighed. It seemed beneficently intended that they should pass away in slumber.

Five minutes later, the dreadful deed was done.

Sir James Tyrrel entered the chamber. The murderers, with their ghastly countenances, were standing beside the couch. The light of the lamp fell upon the victims. The pillow had been removed. The attitude of the brothers was unchanged—their expression placid, even in death.

By Sir James Tyrrel's direction, the unfortunate princes were buried deep in the ground, at the foot of the stone staircase.

Subsequently, however, the bodies were conveyed, by King Richard's order, to another grave in the White Tower, which remained long undiscovered.

But the remains of the royal youths being found in 1674,

they were finally interred in Henry VII.'s Chapel in Westminster Abbey.

Having accomplished his work, Sir James Tyrrel set off for Warwick to claim his reward.

His reward, in the end, was the scaffold.

Dorset was not drowned on the night when he attempted to liberate the princes from the Tower. He was picked up by a boat, and after running several other risks, contrived to regain the Abbey Sanctuary.

It was his sad office to inform the queen of the murder of her two sons.

Uttering a piercing shriek, she fell to the ground.

When she recovered her sensibility, she appeared half frenzied, filled the hall with cries, tore her hair, beat her breast, and reproached herself bitterly with her madness in delivering her youngest son to destruction.

“My Richard, my darling, would be here now, if I had remained firm!” she cried. “How could I part with him—how could I surrender him to the bloodthirsty Gloucester?”

She then knelt down, and with outstretched hands, invoked Heaven's vengeance.

“O, Lord!” she exclaimed, “remember, I pray thee, the death of these innocents and avenge them!”

CHAPTER IV

HOW JANE WAS DELIVERED TO THE BISHOP OF LONDON FOR PUNISHMENT

Confined for more than three months in the Beauchamp Tower, Jane had begun to look upon her prison as a haven of rest.

Her captivity had been wholly spent in devotion and acts

of penitence, enjoined by her confessor, Father Lambert. Had the good priest been able to obtain a pardon from the vindictive king, he could have procured her admission to the Priory of Saint Helen's, the prioress being willing to receive her. But Richard's resentment was still strong as ever against her. Alice Fordham was set free, but Jane was reserved for punishment.

At length the officers of the Ecclesiastical Court came to the Tower, demanded the body of Jane Shore, and received her from the lieutenant.

No indignity was spared her. Guarded by half a dozen halberdiers, like a common criminal, she was taken across Tower Hill, and through the public streets to the palace of the Bishop of London, which was situated on the northwest side of Saint Paul's.

She was accompanied by Father Lambert, and she had need of the good priest's support. As she passed along Cornhill and Cheapside, she was beset by crowds of curious spectators, but her looks and demeanor were so gentle and resigned, that all who beheld her were filled with compassion.

On arriving at the bishop's palace, she was lodged in a small cell, and here Father Lambert left her, promising to attend at the court on the morrow.

A miserable pallet was provided, and her fare was bread and water, but she slept well on her wretched couch, and having resolved to fast, the food remained untouched.

Next day she was brought before the court, which was assembled in a large hall of the palace, panelled with black oak, and partially hung with tapestry. At the upper end was a large crucifix.

The bishop was in full ecclesiastical attire, as were the dignitaries of the cathedral, by whom he was surrounded.

The prelate had an austere expression of countenance, and eyed Jane sternly as she stood before him.

She cast one timid, half-supplicating look at her judges, and then fixed her eyes on the ground.

She was very pale, and her cheeks bore traces of affliction, but her beauty was unimpaired, as all who beheld her acknowledged in their hearts.

Her dress was plain as that of a nun, and consisted of a gown of gray serge, and a wimple. A string of beads hung from her girdle. When she had been compelled to pass through the streets she had worn a hood, but this was now laid aside, and her fair tresses were uncovered.

Very few persons were admitted, or the court would have been inconveniently crowded. Among those present were the lord mayor and several important citizens, who had petitioned the king in Jane's favor, but had not yet received an answer, though it was momentarily expected.

This circumstance caused a slight delay in the proceedings, but as no messenger appeared, the bishop clothed his brow with frowns, and addressing Jane in a stern tone, severely censured her for her conduct—lashing her as with a whip of scorpions.

She attempted no reply, for she had nothing to allege in her defence; but Father Lambert earnestly recommended her to mercy on the score of her deep and sincere penitence, to which he could bear witness.

Doctor Lewis, the late king's physician, made a strong appeal to the bishop and the court in her behalf, enumerating the many kind actions she had performed, and energetically declaring that if all those she had benefited and served were there to speak for her, the court would be filled with them.

But this eloquent address failed to touch the judges, and the bishop was preparing to pass sentence, when an officer entered the court with a missive from the lord mayor.

The prelate paused while the letter was opened, and a feeling of intense anxiety pervaded the assemblage for a few mo-

ments, but it was then seen from the lord mayor's looks that the petition had failed.

At this trying juncture Jane manifested no emotion, and did not even raise her eyes.

Perfect silence being again restored, the bishop sentenced Jane to perform public penance for her sin, the enormity of which he had already characterized, in Saint Paul's Cathedral on the following morning.

But the severe part of the sentence was to come, and for this the majority of the assemblage were wholly unprepared.

"Look at me, wretched woman, while I pronounce thy doom!" said the bishop, yet more sternly than he had hitherto spoken. "When thou hast publicly declared thy repentance in the manner prescribed, it is the king's command that thou be cast forth into the streets in thy penitent garb, and be thenceforth treated as one excluded from the communion of our holy Church. None shall afford thee shelter, none give thee food or drink, on pain of death, but thou shalt be left to perish miserably! Such is thy sentence, and doubt not it will be rigorously fulfilled. I give thee no hope of pardon!"

A slight cry escaped Jane, but that was all. A couple of halberdiers advanced, and took her back to the cell.

As she quitted the court, she threw a grateful glance at Father Lambert and Doctor Lewis.

*CHAPTER V**HOW THE PENANCE WAS PERFORMED*

Next morning, at an early hour, an immense crowd was collected within the area in front of Saint Paul's, it having been rumored throughout the city that the beautiful Mistress Shore was about to perform public penance on that day.

The greatest curiosity was exhibited to witness the spectacle, and every available spot likely to command a view of it was occupied.

Every window looking upon the court of the bishop's palace, upon Paul's Cross, and upon the great western porch of the cathedral, was filled with spectators.

Gloomy weather harmonized with the scene about to be enacted. The vast edifice around which the throng was gathered looked unusually sombre, and its lofty spire could scarcely be distinguished amid heavy overhanging clouds.

Jane's career and extraordinary beauty formed the general theme of conversation. Though her conduct was blamed, some excuses were made for her, and it was universally admitted that her sentence was infinitely too severe. Many, indeed, spoke of it with horror and indignation.

To repress any attempt at tumult, a troop of archers was stationed at the rear of Paul's Cross.

Moreover, two lines of halberdiers extended from the gate of the bishop's palace to the cathedral porch.

About nine o'clock, a bell began to toll, and a solemn procession issued from the palace gate, and took its way slowly along the lane formed by the halberdiers.

The procession was headed by a long train of monks, in gowns and scapularies of brown russet. After them followed

the chantry priests in their robes, the minor canons, the prebendaries, and the dean, all in full pontificals.

Next came a priest, with a richly decorated crozier, and then the bishop himself, wearing a mitre blazing with jewels, and a splendidly embroidered dalmatic.

Marching on with a proud step, the prelate was followed by a cross-bearer, carrying a large silver cross.

Then came the penitent, carrying in her hand a lighted taper.

Her profuse fair tresses were unbound, and streamed down over her shoulders. Her feet were bare, and her only garment was a white kirtle, that scarcely sufficed to conceal the exquisite proportions of her figure.

Exhibited in this guise to thousands of prying observers, she felt a shame amounting to agony, made manifest by her blushes and shrinking deportment.

Yet she walked on, though expecting each moment to sink to the ground. Had not words of sympathy and commiseration reached her ear, and given her strength, she must have fallen.

Never for a moment did she raise her eyes. Behind her came another train of priests and monks.

Presently, the procession reached the porch; and the dean and bishop having passed into the fane, she was seen climbing the stone steps with her small white feet.

She was now on the very spot where she beheld the king on her wedding-day; and the thought crossed her, and gave her an additional pang.

Many of the spectators remembered having seen her there on that day, and were forcibly struck with the contrast of the present with the past. Yet none of them declared they had foreseen what would occur.

In another moment she had entered the sacred edifice, and was pacing the cold pavement of the nave, along which moved the procession.

The whole interior of the vast fabric was crowded, and the ordeal to which the penitent had now to submit was quite as trying as that she had previously experienced.

More so, indeed; for the spectators, not being kept back by a guard, now pressed closely upon her.

From observations that reached her, she learnt that the lord mayor and several important citizens were present; but she saw them not.

At length she approached the high altar, around which was collected the priestly train. Kneeling down before the altar, she acknowledged her guilt, in accents that scarcely reached the ear of the bishop, and declared her profound repentance.

“Some atonement has now been made, daughter,” said the prelate; “but your sin is not yet expiated. I have no power to remit the sentence passed upon you by the king. Arise, and depart!”

“Depart! Whither?” she exclaimed, looking as if her senses had left her. “May I not die here?”

The bishop made no reply.

Two priests then came forward, and bade her follow them. She made no more remonstrances, but obeyed.

Pitying exclamations were heard from the assemblage as she was led through their midst, and these expressions of sympathy soon deepened into threats against her conductors.

What might have happened it is difficult to say, had not a party of halberdiers, headed by an officer, met them, and taken charge of the penitent.

Placing her in their midst, the halberdiers conducted her to a side door, where they detained her for a few moments while the party of archers previously referred to was drawn up.

They then led her to Paul’s Cross, so that she could be seen by the entire assemblage.

A trumpet was then sounded, and proclamation made by an officer, in the king’s name, that Jane Shore, having been ex-

communicated for her sins, none were to afford her food or shelter, on pain of death.

A like proclamation was afterwards made at the Cross at Cheapside, and at other places in the city.

Parties of archers were likewise ordered to patrol the streets during the remainder of the day, and throughout the night, to see the injunction strictly obeyed.

Meanwhile, the crowd had been dispersed by the archers, and Jane was left alone, seated on the lowest step of Paul's Cross, with her face covered by her hands.

CHAPTER VI

EXPIATION

A harsh voice at length aroused her from the state of apathy into which she had sunk, and, looking up, she beheld a mounted archer.

The man had a savage aspect, and seemed wholly unmoved.

"You cannot remain here longer, woman!" he said. "You are in the way."

"I know not where to turn my steps," she replied, despairingly. "I have little strength left. All will soon be over with me. Let me stay here to the last."

"Paul's Cross is not a place of refuge, but a pulpit for preaching," he rejoined, "and good folks will come here anon to listen to a sermon from the dean. The officers will then drive you hence with stripes, if you go not willingly."

"May I not return to the cathedral?" she implored.

"The doors of all churches are closed against you. Bring not further trouble on your head, but begone!"

He then rode back slowly to his comrades, two of whom were stationed at the gates of the bishop's palace.

Three others kept guard on the eastern side of the enclosure, which was now completely deserted, except by a few priests.

Groups of persons, however, were collected at the corners of the streets leading towards the cathedral, watching the penitent from a distance, and many pitying spectators were gazing at her with tearful eyes from the windows of the surrounding habitations.

But none dared help her—none dared come near her. The few who made the attempt were quickly driven back by the guard.

Father Lambert desired to offer her religious consolation, but was not allowed to approach her.

For several hours she wandered through the streets, scarcely knowing whither she went. The guard followed her at a distance, and forced her to go on. Her feet were cut by the sharp stones, and left marks of blood on the pathways. But the guard allowed her no rest, and suffered no one to assist her.

Completely worn out, at length, she attempted to enter the Hospital of Saint Mary of Bethlehem, in Bishopsgate street, but was rudely repulsed by the porter, and fell senseless to the ground.

When she fully regained her senses, which was not for a long time, since no means were taken for her recovery, she found herself lying beside a cross in a field, outside the city walls.

The spot was solitary, and she had been taken there to die undisturbed.

For this good office, by whomsoever performed, she felt thankful. That her sufferings would soon be over, she doubted not. Never since she quitted the Tower had food passed her lips. The bread and water in her cell at the

bishop's palace were left untouched. The duration of her punishment was thus abridged.

But she felt not the pains of starvation. Her strength was now nearly gone, and her faintness and exhaustion were such that she could not raise herself, though her desire was very great to kneel down at the foot of the cross.

But she could pray, and she prayed constantly and fervently.

Night had come on, but the pale glimmer of a crescent moon showed her the ancient walls of the city, with a fortified gate in the distance, and a monastic structure close at hand.

From the monastery came the sound of a hymn. She listened to the strains, and they greatly soothed her.

At length the solemn chant ceased, and the lights hitherto visible in the windows of the gray old pile disappeared. The brethren had retired to rest.

No; the gate opened, and a friar came forth, and took his way slowly towards the cross.

A thrill passed through her frame as he stood beside her. His hood was thrown back, and the moonlight revealed the pallid countenance of Alban Shore.

His features wore a pitying expression.

"Do you receive your sufferings as a penance justly inflicted by Heaven for your sins?" he said. "Do you truly and heartily repent?"

"Truly and heartily!" she murmured.

"Then may Heaven forgive you, even as I forgive you!" he said.

She pressed his hand to her lips.

Ere many minutes her sorrows were over, and Shore was praying by the lifeless body of the erring woman he had never ceased to love.

CONTENTS

BOOK I.—ALBAN SHORE

CHAPTER	PAGE
I How Jane Milverton, the Mercer's Daughter, of Cheapside, was Accounted the fairest Damsel in London	3
II How twelve young Bachelors Fell in Love with Jane, and Entreated her to Make Choice of one of them	8
III From which it appears that an old Woman had Foretold that Jane would have a Royal Lover	15
IV How Alban Shore on the Way Home Encountered two Court Knights, and how Jane was Serenaded	19
V In what Manner Jane's Consent was Won by Alban	26
VI How Alban Shore was Wedded to the beautiful Jane Milverton in Saint Paul's Cathedral, and how the King Saluted the Bride at the Porch	29
VII How Jane Found a dangerous Confidante in Alicia Fordham	35
VIII Showing on what Errand the King Came to Lombard Street	40
IX Showing on what Errand the King Came, and how Jane and her Husband were Bidden to the Festivities at Windsor Castle	43
X How Jane Determined not to Go to Windsor, and by whom her prudent Resolve was Overruled	48

CHAPTER	PAGE
XI Of the goodly Company Assembled in the Lord Mayor's Barge	51
XII How they were Entertained at Shene Palace, and how Malbouche, the King's Jester, Came on Board the Barge, and what Passed between him and Jane	54
XIII How the King and Queen, with the Lords and Ladies of the Court, Returned from Hawking in the Forest	58
XIV Of the grand Collation given in the Pavilion; and of the strange Present Brought by Garter from Louis of France .	64
XV How Jane Promised the King an Answer at the Ball	67
XVI How Jousts were Held in the Lower Court of Windsor Castle; how the Prize was Bestowed on Jane by the Marquis of Dorset; what Occurred at the Ball; and how Shore Left his Wife	70

BOOK II.—THE EXPEDITION TO FRANCE

I How Jane Resided at the Hunting Lodge in the Home Park, and how King Edward Prepared to Invade France . . .	79
II How King Edward Embarked with his Forces at Dover, and how he was Received at Calais	84
III How the English Army was Encamped without the walls of Calais; and how Isidore, the young Esquire, was Sent on a secret Mission to Louis	90
IV How Charles the Bold Arrived at the English Camp; and of his Interview with King Edward in the Royal Pavilion	96
V How King Edward Marched his Army to Peronne; and how the Constable Saint Pol Refused him Admittance to Saint Quentin	102

CHAPTER	PAGE
VI How Isidore Proceeded towards Compiègne, and how he was Stopped by a Party of Burgundian Soldiers on the Way to Montdidier	106
VII What Passed between Isidore and the Sire de Comines . .	109
VIII How Isidore Met the Count de Beaujeu in the Forest of Compiègne; and how the young Esquire and his Companion were Lodged in the Royal Palace	112
IX How Isidore Had an Audience of King Louis XI. in his Majesty's private Cabinet in the Palace	117
X How two splendid Ladies' Dresses were Sent by King Louis as a present to Isidore and Claude	124
XI How Louis XI. Hunted the wild Boar in the Forest of Compiègne	130
XII How Isidore Saved a Cordelier from the Cord	134
XIII By whose Contrivance Isidore Overheard what Passed between Louis and the Envoys of the Duke of Burgundy and the Constable of Saint Pol	139
XIV How the Sire de Merancourt became Enamored of Jane; and of the Stratagem by which he Obtained Admittance to her Chamber	145
XV Of the terrible Reproaches Addressed by Charles the Bold to King Edward	149
XVI Showing in what Manner the whole English Army was Entertained by King Louis at Amiens	152
XVII How the Sire de Merancourt again Attempted to Carry out his Design, and by whom he was Slain	158
XVIII How a wooden Bridge was Built across the Somme, at Picquigny, by Louis, for his Proposed Interview with the King of England	164

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIX In whose Presence the Meeting Took Place between the two Monarchs, and how the Truce Agreed upon was Sworn to by them	169
XX How it was Said at the French Court that six hundred Casks of Wine and a Pension Sent King Edward back to England	175

BOOK III.—THE DUKE OF CLARENCE

I How Isidore Informed Margaret of Anjou that her Captivity was at End, and how the Announcement was Received . . .	181
II How Clarence Revealed his Designs to Jane	186
III How the King Shook off his Lethargy	193
IV In what Manner the Duchess of Clarence was Poisoned by Ankaret Twynhyo; and of the Fate of the Poisoner . . .	197
V The Chase of the Milk-white Hart in Wargrave Park	203
VI Of the Quarrel between the King and Clarence, and how the Duke was Arrested	208
VII How Clarence was Imprisoned in the Bowyer Tower	213
VIII How a Butt of Malmsey was Sent to Clarence by the Duke of Gloucester	216
IX How Clarence was Tried for High Treason and Condemned to Death	219
X Showing in what Manner the Duke of Clarence was Put to Death	222

BOOK IV.—EDWARD THE FOURTH

I How Caxton Presented a Psalter to the King	231
II The Visit to the Caxton Printing-press	235

CONTENTS

369

CHAPTER	PAGE
III Fox and Geese	240
IV How Edward deeply Resented the Affront Offered him by Louis, and Vowed to Invade France again	247
V What Passed in the King's Ante-chamber; and of the Secret Instructions Given by Gloucester to Catesby	254
VI How the Warrant for ten thousand golden Crowns by the King to Jane Disappeared	258
VII Of Edward's last Banquet and how it Ended	264
VIII What Occurred at the King's Death-bed	270
IX The King's last Gifts to Jane	274
X How King Edward's Body was Exposed to public View on the Day of his Death, in Westminster Abbey	279
XI How King Edward IV. was Interred in Saint George's Chapel	287

BOOK V.—THE ABBEY SANCTUARY

I How Jane Devoted herself to the Queen	293
II How the Archbishop of York Brought the Great Seal to the Queen	299
III The Abbot of Westminster	304
IV How the Queen Delivered up the Duke of York to Cardinal Bourchier and the Lords	307
V How the Marquis of Dorset Took Refuge in the Sanctuary .	310
VI By whom Jane was Induced to Quit the Sanctuary	313

BOOK VI.—LORD HASTINGS

I Showing the Perfidy of Alice Fordham	321
II How Jane was Arrested, and Taken to the Tower	323

CHAPTER	PAGE
III How Jane was Brought before the Lord Protector and the Council	327
IV Presages of Ill	332
V How Lord Hastings was Beheaded on Tower Green	336

BOOK VII.—THE PENANCE

I Of the Attempt Made by Dorset to Deliver the young Princes from the Tower	343
II How the Attempt Failed	347
III In what Manner the young Princes were Put to Death in the Garden Tower	351
IV How Jane was Delivered to the Bishop of London for Punishment	355
V How the Penance was Performed	359
VI Expiation	362





PR
4002
G6
19--

Ainsworth, William Harrison
The goldsmiths' wife

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY
